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THE

NATURE, POWER, DECEIT,

AND

PREVALENCY

OF

INDWELLING SIN

IN

BELIEVERS.

BY THE

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INDWELLING SIN

IN

BELIEVERS.

CHAPTER I.

Rom. viii. 21.—Indwelling Sin in Believers, treated of by the Apostle—(The place explained.)

It is of indwelling sin, and that in the remainders of it in persons after their conversion to God, with its power, efficacy, and effects, that we intend to treat. This also is the great design of the apostle, to manifest and evince, in chapter vii. of the Epistle to the Romans. Many indeed are the contests about the principal scope of the apostle in that chapter, and in what state the person is, under the law, or under grace, whose condition he expresseth therein. I shall not at present enter into that dispute, but take that for granted, which may be undeniably proved and evinced; namely, that it is the condition of a regenerate person, with respect to the remaining power of indwelling sin, which is there proposed, and exemplified by, and in, the person of the apostle himself. In that discourse therefore of his, shall the foundation be laid of what we have to offer upon this subject. Not that I shall proceed in an exposition of his revelation of this truth, as it lies in its own contexture, but only

make use of what is delivered by him as occasion shall offer itself. And here first occurs, that which he affirms, verse 21, "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me."

There are four things observable in these words.

First, The appellation he gives to indwelling sin, whereby he expresses its power and efficacy; it is a *law*. For that which he terms a *law*, in this verse, he calls in the foregoing, "sin that dwelleth in him."

Secondly, The way whereby he came to the discovery of this *law*, not absolutely, and in its own nature, but in himself; he *found* it. "I find a law."

Thirdly, The frame of his soul and inward man with this law of sin, and under its discovery; "he would do good."

Fourthly, The state and activity of this *law* when the soul is in that frame, when it would do good; "it is present with him." For what ends and purposes we shall show afterwards.

The first thing observable is the appellation here used by the apostle. He calls indwelling sin a *law*; it is a law.

A law is taken either, properly, for a *directive rule*, or improperly, for an *operative effective principle*, which seems to have the force of a law. In its first sense it is a moral rule which directs and commands, and sundry ways moves and regulates the mind and the will, as to the things which it requires, or forbids. This is evidently the general nature and work of a law. Some things it commands, some things it forbids, with rewards and penalties, which move and impel men to do the one, and avoid the other. Hence in a secondary sense, an inward principle, that moves and inclines

constantly to any actions, is called a *law*. The principle that is in the *nature* of every thing, moving and carrying it towards its own end and rest, is called the *law of nature*. In this respect every inward principle that inclines and urges unto operations or actings suitable to itself, is a *law*. So Rom. viii. 2, The powerful and effectual working of the Spirit and grace of Christ in the hearts of believers, is called the "law of the Spirit of life." And for this reason does the apostle here call indwelling sin a law. It is a powerful and effectual indwelling principle, inclining and pressing to actions agreeable and suitable to its nature. This and no other is the intention of the apostle in this expression. For although that term, a *law*, may sometimes intend a *state* and *condition*, and if here so used, the meaning of the words should be, "I find that this is my *condition*, this is the *state* of things with me, that when I would do good evil is present with me," which makes no great alteration in the principle intendment of the place; yet properly it can denote nothing here, but the chief *subject* treated of. For although the name of a *law* be variously used by the apostle in this chapter, yet when it relates to sin, it is no where applied by him to the condition of the person, but only to express either the nature, or the power, of sin itself. So verse 23, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity unto the law of sin which is in my members." That which he here calls the *law of his mind*, from the principal subject and seat of it, is in itself no other but the "law of the Spirit of life," which is in Christ Jesus, chapter viii. 2; or the effectual power of the spirit of grace, as was said. But the *law* as applied to *sin*,

has a double sense: for as in the first place, "I see a law in my members," it denotes the being and nature of sin; so in the latter, "leading into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members," it signifies its power and efficacy. And both these are comprised in the same name singly used, verse 20. Now that which we observe from this *name*, or term of a *law* attributed to sin, is, that there is an exceeding efficacy and power in the remainder of indwelling sin in believers, with a constant working towards evil.

Thus it is in believers; it is a law even *in them*, though not *to them*. Though its rule be broken, its strength weakened and impaired, its root mortified, yet it is a *law* still of great force and efficacy. There where it is least felt, it is most powerful. Carnal men in reference to spiritual and moral duties, are nothing but this law, they do nothing but from it, and by it. It is in them a ruling and prevailing principle of all *moral* actions, with reference to a supernatural and eternal end. I shall not consider it in them in whom it has most power, but in them in whom its power is chiefly discovered and discerned, that is in believers; in the others only in order to the further conviction and manifestation thereof.

Secondly, The apostle proposeth the way whereby he discovered this law in himself, ἐυρισκω αρα τον νομον, I find then, or therefore, a *law*. He found it; it had been told him there was such a law, it had been preached unto him. This convinced him that there was a *law of sin*. But it is one thing for a man to know in general, that there is a law of sin, another thing for a man to have an experience of the power of this law of sin in himself. It is preached to all; all men that own the

Scripture acknowledge it, as being declared therein; but there are but few that know it in themselves, we should else have more complaints of it than we have, and more contendings against it, and less fruits of it in the world. But this is that which the apostle affirms; not that the *doctrine* of it had been preached to him, but that he found it by experience in himself. "I find a law;" I have experience of its power and efficacy. For a man to find his sickness and danger thereon from its effects, is another thing than to hear a discourse about a disease from its causes. And this experience is the great preservative of all divine truths in the soul. This it is to know a thing indeed, in reality, to know it for ourselves, when, as we are taught it from the word, so we find it in ourselves. Hence we observe,

Further, Believers have experience of the power and efficacy of indwelling sin. They *find* it in themselves, they *find* it as a law. It has a self evidencing efficacy to them that are *alive* to discern it; they that find not its power, are under its dominion. Whosoever contend against it, shall know and find that it is present with them, that it is powerful in them. He shall find the *stream* to be strong, who swims against it, though he who rolls along with it, be insensible of it.

Thirdly, The general frame of believers notwithstanding the inhabitation of this law of sin, is here also expressed. "They would do good." This law is present, θελοντι εμοι ποιειν το καλον. The habitual inclination of their will is to good. This law *in* them, is not a law to them, as it is to unbelievers. They are not wholly obnoxious to its power, nor morally to its commands. Grace has the sovereignty in their souls; this gives

them a will to good; they would do good, that is always and constantly. 1 John iii. 9. Ποιειν ἁμαρτιαν, *to commit sin*, is to make a trade of sin, to make it a man's business to sin; so it is said, a believer doth "not commit sin." And so ποιειν το καλον, to do that which is good; to will to do so, is to have the *habitual* bent and inclination of the will set on that which is good, that is, morally and spiritually good, which is the proper subject treated of; whence is our third observation.

There is, and there is through grace kept up in believers, a constant and ordinarily prevailing will of doing good, notwithstanding the power and efficacy of indwelling sin to the contrary.

This, in their *worst* condition, distinguishes them from unbelievers in their *best*. The *will* in unbelievers is under the power of the law of sin. The opposition they make to sin; either in the root, or branches of it, is from their light and their consciences; the *will of sinning* in them is never taken away. Take away all other considerations and hindrances whereof we shall treat afterwards, and they would sin willingly always. Their faint endeavours to answer their convictions, are far from *a will of doing that which is good*. They will plead indeed, that they would leave their sins if they could, and they would fain do better than they do. But it is the *working* of their light and convictions, not any spiritual inclination of their wills, which they intend by that expression. For where there is a will of doing good, there is a choice of that which is good for the sake of its own excellency, because it is desirable and suitable to the soul, and therefore to be preferred before that which is contrary. Now this is not in any unbe-

lievers; they do not, they cannot so choose that which is spiritually good, nor is it so excellent or suitable to any principle that is in them: only they have some desires to attain that end, whereto that which is good doth lead, and to avoid that evil which the neglect of it tends to. And these also are for the most part so weak and languid in many of them, that they put them not upon any considerable endeavours: witness that luxury, sloth, worldliness, and security, that the generality of men are even drowned in. But in believers there is a will of doing good, an habitual disposition and inclination in their wills to that which is spiritually good. And where this is, it is accompanied with answerable effects. The will is the principle of our moral actions, and therefore to the prevailing disposition thereof, will the general course of our actions be suited. Good things will proceed from the good treasures of the heart. Nor can this disposition be evidenced to be in any but by its fruits. A will of doing good, without doing good, is but pretended.

Fourthly, There is yet another thing remaining in these words of the apostle, arising from that respect that the presence of sin has to the time and season of duty: "when I would do good, (saith he) evil is present with me."

There are two things to be considered in the will of doing good, that is in believers.

First, There is its habitual residence in them. They have always an habitual inclination of will to that which is good. And this habitual preparation for good is always present with them, as the apostle expresses it, verse 18th of this chapter.

Secondly, There are special times and seasons for the exercise of that principle. There is, "When I would do good," a season wherein this

or that good, this or that duty, is to be performed and accomplished, suitably to the habitual preparation and inclination of the will.

To these two, there are two things in indwelling sin opposed. To the gracious principle residing in the will, inclining to that which is spiritually good, it is opposed as it is a law, that is a contrary principle, inclining to evil, with an aversion from that which is good. To the second, or the actual willing of this or that good in particular, to this, "when I would do good," is opposed the presence of this law, "evil is present with me," παρακειται εμοι το κακον: evil is at hand and ready to oppose the actual accomplishment of the good aimed at. Whence,

Fourthly, Indwelling sin is effectually operative in rebelling and inclining to evil, when the will of doing good is in a particular manner active, and in clining to obedience.

And this is the description of him who is a believer, and a sinner, as every one who is the former, is the latter also. These are the contrary principles, and the contrary operations that are in him. The principles are, a will of doing good on the one hand, from grace, and a law of sin on the other. Their adverse actings and operations are insinuated in those expressions, "when I would do good, evil is present with me." And these both are more fully expressed by the apostle, Gal. v. 17, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other; so that I cannot do the things that I would."

And here lie the springs of the whole course of our obedience. An acquaintance with these several principles and their actions, is the principal part

of our wisdom. They are, upon the matter, next to the free grace of God in our justification by the blood of Christ, the only things wherein the glory of God and our own souls are concerned. These are the springs of our holiness and our sins, of our joys and troubles, of our refreshments and sorrows. It is, then, all our concernments to be thoroughly acquainted with these things, who intend to walk with God, or to glorify him in this world.

And hence we may see what wisdom is required, in the guiding and management of our hearts and ways before God. Where the subjects of a ruler are in feuds and oppositions one against another, unless great wisdom be used in the government of the whole, all things will quickly be ruinous in that state. There are these contrary principles in the hearts of believers, and if they labour not to be spiritually wise, how shall they be able to steer their course aright? Many men live in the dark to themselves all their days: whatever else they know, they know not themselves. They know their outward estates, how rich they are: and the condition of their bodies, as to health and sickness, they are careful to examine; but as to their inward man, and their principles as to God and eternity, they know little or nothing of themselves. Indeed, few labour to grow wise in this matter, few study themselves as they ought, are acquainted with the evil of their own hearts as they ought, on which yet the whole course of their obedience, and consequently of their eternal condition, depends. This, therefore, is our wisdom, and it is a needful wisdom, if we have any design to please God, or to avoid that which is a provocation to the eyes of his glory.

We shall find also in our inquiry hereunto, what

diligence and watchfulness is required unto a Christian conversation. There is a constant enemy to it in every one's own heart; and what an enemy it is we shall afterwards show, for this is our design to discover him to the uttermost. In the mean time, we may well bewail the woful sloth and negligence that is in the most, even of professors. They live and walk as though they intended to go to heaven hood-winked and asleep, as though they had no enemy to deal with. Their mistake, therefore, and folly, will be fully laid open in our progress.

That which I shall principally fix upon, in reference to our present design, from this place of the apostle, is that which was first laid down, namely: that "there is an exceeding efficacy and power in the remainder of indwelling sin in believers, with a constant inclination and working towards evil."

Awake, therefore, all of you in whose hearts is any thing of the ways of God. Your enemy is not only upon you, as on Samson of old, but is in you also. He is at work by all ways of force and craft, as we shall see. Would you not dishonour God and his gospel? would you not scandalize the saints and ways of God? would you not wound your consciences and endanger your souls? would you not grieve the good and holy Spirit of God, the author of all your comforts? would you keep your garments undefiled, and escape the woful temptations and pollutions of the days wherein we live? would you be preserved from the number of the apostates in these latter days? awake to the consideration of this cursed enemy, which is the spring of all these and innumerable other evils, as also of the ruin of all the souls that perish in this world.

CHAPTER II.

Indwelling Sin a Law—In what sense it is so called—What kind of Law it is—An inward effective Principle called a Law—The power of Sin thence evinced.

That which we have proposed for consideration is the power and efficacy of Indwelling Sin. The ways whereby it may be evinced are many. I shall begin with the appellation of it in the place before mentioned, it is a law; "I find a law," saith the apostle. It is because of its power and efficacy that it is so called, so is also the principle of grace in believers the "law of the spirit of life," as we observed before, Rom. viii. 3, "which is the exceeding greatness of the power of God in them." Eph. i. 19. Where there is a law there is power.

We shall therefore show both what belongs to it, as it is a law in general, and also what is peculiar or proper in it, as being such a law, as we have described.

There are in general two things attending every law as such.

First, Dominion, Rom. vii. 1. "The law hath dominion over a man whilst he liveth;" κυριευει του ανθρωπου, it lordeth it over a man. Where any law takes place, κυριευει, it hath dominion. It is properly the act of a superior, and it belongs to its nature to exact obedience by way of dominion. Now there is a twofold dominion, as there is a twofold law. There is a moral authoritative dominion over a man, and there is a real effective dominion in a man. The first is an affection of the law of God, the latter of the law of sin.—The law of sin

hath not in itself a moral dominion, it hath not a rightful dominion or authority over any man, but it has that which is equivalent unto it; whence it is said βασιλευειν, to reign as king, Rom. vi. 12, and κυριευειν, to lord it, or have dominion, ver. 14, as a law in general is said to have, chap. vii. 1. But because it hath lost its complete dominion, in reference to believers, of whom alone we speak, I shall not insist upon it in this utmost extent of its power. But even in them it is a law still, though not a law to them; yet, as was said, it is a law in them. And though it have not a complete, and as it were, a rightful dominion over them, yet it will have a domination as to some things in them. It is still a law, and that in them, so that all its actings are the actings of a law; that is, it acts with power, though it have lost its complete power of ruling in them. Though it be weakened, yet its nature is not changed. It is a law still and therefore powerful. And as its particular workings (which we shall afterwards consider) are the ground of this appellation, so the term itself teacheth us in general, what we are to expect from it, and what endeavours it will use for dominion, to which it has been accustomed.

Secondly, A law, as a law, has an efficacy to provoke those that are obnoxious to the things that it requireth. A law hath rewards and punishments accompanying it. These secretly prevail on them to whom they are proposed, though the things commanded be not much desirable. And generally all laws have their efficacy on the minds of men, from the rewards and punishments that are annexed to them. Nor is this law without this spring of power: it hath its rewards and punishments.

The pleasures of sin are the rewards of sin; a reward that most men lose their souls to obtain. By this, the law of sin contended in Moses against the law of grace, Heb. xi. 25, 26. "He chose rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; for he looked unto the recompense of reward." The contest was in his mind between the law of sin and the law of grace. The motive on the part of the law of sin, wherewith it sought to draw him over, and wherewith it prevails on the most, was the reward that it proposed unto him, namely, that he should have the present enjoyment of the pleasures of sin. By this it contended against the reward annexed to the law of grace called "the recompense of reward."

By this sorry reward doth this law keep the world in obedience to its commands. And experience shows us of what power it is to influence the minds of men. It has also punishments that it threatens men with, who labour to cast off its yoke. Whatever evil, trouble or danger in the world attends gospel obedience; whatever hardship or violence is to be offered to the sensual part of our natures, in a strict course of mortification, sin makes use of, as if they were punishments attending the neglect of its commands. By these it prevails on the fearful, who shall have no share in life eternal. Rev. xxi. 8. And it is hard to say by which of these, its pretended rewards, or pretended punishments, it most prevails, in which of them its greatest strength doth lie. By its rewards it enticeth men to sins of commission, as they are called, in ways and actions tending to the satisfaction of its lusts. By its punishments it induces men to the omitting of duties, a course tending to no less a

pernicious event than the former. By which of these the law of sin has its greatest success in and upon the souls of men is not evident, and that because they are seldom or never separated, but equally take place on the same persons. But this is certain, that by tenders and promises of pleasures of sin on the one hand, by the threats of deprivation of all sensual contentments, and the infliction of temporal evils on the other, it has an exceeding efficacy on the minds of men, oftentimes, of believers themselves. Unless a man be prepared to reject the reasonings that will offer themselves from the one and the other of these, there is no standing before the power of this law. The world falls before them every day. With what deceit and violence they are urged and imposed on the minds of men, we shall afterwards declare; as also what advantages they have to prevail upon them. Look on the generality of men, and you shall find them wholly by these means at sin's disposal. Do the profits and pleasures of sin lie before them, nothing can withhold them from reaching after them. Do difficulties and inconveniences attend the duties of the Gospel, they will have nothing to do with them, and so are wholly given up to the rule and dominion of this law.

And this light, in general, we have unto the power and efficacy of indwelling sin from the general nature of a law, whereof it is a partaker.

We may consider next, what kind of law in particular it is, which will further evidence that power of it which we are inquiring after. It is not an outward, written, commanding, directing law, but an inbred, working, impelling, urging law. A law proposed unto us, is not to be compared for efficacy to a law inbred in us. Adam

had a law of sin proposed to him in his temptation, but because he had no law of sin inbred and working in him, he might have withstood it. An inbred law must needs be effectual. Let us take an example from that law, which is contrary to this law of sin. The law of God was at first inbred and natural unto man; it was concreated with his faculties, and was their rectitude both in being and operation, in reference to his end of living unto God, and glorifying of him. Hence it had an especial power in the whole soul, to enable it unto all obedience, yea, and to make all obedience easy and pleasant. Such is the power of an inbred law. And though this law, as to the rule and dominion of it, be now by nature cast out of the soul, yet the remaining sparks of it, because they are inbred, are very powerful and effectual, as the apostle declares, Rom. ii. 14, 15. Afterwards God renews this law, and writes it in tables of stone; but what is the efficacy of this law? will it now, as it is external and proposed unto men, enable them to perform the things that it exacts and requires? not at all. God knew it would not, unless it were turned to an eternal law again; that is, unless, of a moral outward rule, it be turned into an inward real principle. Wherefore God makes his law internal again, and implants it on the heart as it was at first, when he intends to give it power to produce obedience in all his people. Jer. xxxi. 31, 32, 33, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." This is that which God fixes on, as it were, upon a discovery of the insufficiency of an outward law leading men unto obedience. The written law, says he, will not do it; mercies and deliverances from distress will not effect it; trials and afflictions will not accomplish

it; then, says the Lord, will I take another course; I will turn the written law into an internal living principle in their hearts, and that will have such an efficacy, as shall assuredly make them my people, and keep them so. Now such is this law of sin, it is an indwelling law, Rom. vii. 17. "It is sin that dwelleth in me," verse 20. "Sin that dwelleth in me," verse 21. "It is present with me," verse 23. It is in my members; yea, it is so far in a man, as in some sense it is said to be the man himself, verse 18. "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing." The flesh, which is the seat and throne of this law, yea, which indeed, in this law, is in some sense the man himself, as grace also is the new man. Now from this consideration of it, that it is an indwelling law inclining and moving to sin, as an inward habit or principle, it has sundry advantages increasing its strength and furthering its power. As,

First, It always abides in the soul, it is never absent. The apostle twice uses the expression, it dwelleth in me. There is its constant residence and habitation. If it came upon the soul only at certain seasons, much obedience might be perfectly accomplished in its absence. Yea, and as they deal with usurping tyrants, whom they intend to thrust out of the city, the gates might be sometimes shut against it, that it might not return. The soul might fortify itself against it. But the soul is its home, there it dwells, and is no wanderer. Whereever you are, whatever you are about, this law of sin is always in you; in the best that you do, and in the worst. Men little consider what a dangerous companion is always at home with them. When they are in company, when alone, by night or by

day, all is one, sin is with them. There is a living coal continually in their houses, which if it be not looked unto, will fire them, and it may be, consume them. O the woful security of poor souls! how little do the most of men think of this inbred enemy, that is never from home! How little for the most part doth the watchfulness of any professors answer the danger of their state and condition.

Secondly, It is always ready to apply itself to every end and purpose that it serves unto. It doth not only dwell in me, saith the apostle, "but when I would do good, it is present with me:" there is somewhat more in that expression, than mere indwelling. An inmate may dwell in a house, and yet not be always meddling with what the good man of the house has to do, (that so we may keep to the allusion of indwelling, used by the apostle.) But it is so with this law, it doth so dwell in us, as that it will be present with us in every thing we do; yea, oftentimes when with most earnestness we desire to be quit of it, with most violence it will put itself upon us; "when I would do good, it is present with me." Would you pray? would you hear? would you give alms? would you meditate? would you be in any duty acting faith on God, and love towards him? would you work righteousness? would you resist temptations? this troublesome perplexing indweller will still more or less put himself upon you, and be present with you; so that you cannot perfectly and completely accomplish the thing that is good, as our apostle speaks, verse 18. Sometimes men provoked by hearkening to their temptations, do stir up, and excite their lust: and no wonder if then they find them present and active. But it will be so, when with all our endeavours we labour to be free

from them. This law of sin dwells in us, that is, it adheres as a depraved principle unto our minds in darkness and vanity, unto our affections in sensuality, unto our wills in a loathing of, and aversion from, that which is good, and by some, more, or all of these, is continually putting itself upon us, in inclinations, motions, or suggestions to evil, when we would be most gladly quit of it.

Thirdly, It being an indwelling law, it applies itself to its work with great facility and easiness, like "the sin that doth so easily beset us." Heb. xii. 1. It has a great facility and easiness in the application of itself unto its work; it needs no doors to be opened unto it, it needs no engines to work by. The soul cannot apply itself to any duty of a man, but it must be by the exercise of those faculties wherein this law hath its residence. Is the understanding or the mind to be applied unto any thing? there it is in ignorance, darkness, vanity, folly, madness. Is the will to be engaged? there it is also in spiritual deadness, stubbornness, and the roots of obstinacy. Are the heart and affections to be set to work? there it is in inclinations to the world, and present things, and sensuality, with proneness to all manner of defilements. Hence it is easy for it to insinuate itself into all that we do, and to hinder all that is good, and to further all sin and wickedness. It hath an intimacy, an inwardness with the soul, and therefore in all that we do, doth easily beset us. It possesses those very faculties of the soul, whereby we must do what we do, whatever it be, good or evil. Now all these advantages it has as it is a law, as an indwelling law which manifests its power and efficacy. It is always resident in the soul, it puts itself upon all its actings, and that with easiness and facility.

This is that law which the apostle affirms, that he found in himself. this is the title that he gives unto the powerful and effectual remainders of indwelling sin, even in believers, and these general evidences of its power from that appellation have we. Many there are in the world, who find not this law in them, who whatever they have been taught in the word, have not a spiritual sense and experience of the power of indwelling sin, and that because they are wholly under the dominion of it. They find not that there is darkness and folly in their minds, because they are darkness itself, and darkness will discover nothing. They find not deadness and an indisposition in their hearts and wills to God, because they are dead wholly in trespasses and sins. They are at peace with their lusts, by being in bondage with them. And this is the state of most men in the world, which make them wofully despise all their eternal concernments. Whence is it that men follow and pursue the world with so much greediness, that they neglect heaven, and life, and immortality for it every day? Whence is it that some pursue their sensuality with delight? they will drink, and revel, and have their sports, let others say what they please. Whence is it that so many live so unprofitably under the word, that they understand so little of what is spoken unto them, that they practise less of what they understand, and will by no means be stirred up to answer the mind of God in his calls unto them? It is all from this law of sin, and the power of it that rules and bears sway in men, that all these things do proceed; but it is not such persons of whom at present we particularly treat.

From what has been spoken, it will ensue, that

if there be such a law in believers, it is doubtless their duty to find it out, to find it so to be.

The more they find its power, the less they will feel its effects. It will not at all advantage a man to have a hectical distemper, and not to discover it; a fire lying secretly in his house, and not to know it. So much as men find of this law in them, so much they will abhor it, and themselves, and no more. Proportionably also to their discovery of it will be their earnestness for grace, nor will it rise higher; all watchfulness and diligence in obedience will be answerable also thereunto. Upon this hinge, or finding out, and experiencing the power and the efficacy of this law of sin, turns the whole course of our lives. Ignorance of it breeds senselessness, carelessness, sloth, security and pride, all which the Lord's soul abhors. Eruptions into great, open, conscience-wasting, scandalous sins, are from want of a due spiritual consideration of this law. Inquire then how it is with your souls; what do you find of this law? what experience have you of its power and efficacy? Do you find it dwelling in you, always present with you, exciting itself, or putting forth its poison with facility and easiness, at all times, in all your duties, "when you would do good?" What humiliation, what self-abasement, what intenseness in prayer, what diligence, what watchfulness doth this call for at your hands? what spiritual wisdom do you stand in need of? what supplies of grace, what assistance of the Holy Ghost, will be hence also discovered? I fear we have few of us a diligence proportionable to our danger.

CHAPTER III.

The Seat or Subject of the Law of Sin, the Heart—What meant thereby—Properties of the Heart as possessed by Sin; unsearchable, deceitful—Whence that deceit arises —Improvements of these Considerations.

Having manifested indwelling sin, whereof we treat, in the remainders of it in believers, to be a law, and evinced in general, the power of it from thence, we shall now proceed to give particular instances of its efficacy and advantages, from some things that generally relate to it as such. And these are three. First, Its seat and subject: Secondly, Its natural properties; and Thirdly, Its operations, and the manner thereof, which principally we aim at, and shall attend to.

First, For the seat and subject of this law of sin, the Scripture every where assigns it to be the heart. There indwelling sin keeps its especial residence. It has invaded and possessed the throne of God himself, Eccles. ix. 3: "Madness in the heart of men whilst they live." This is their madness, or the root of all that madness which appears in their lives, Matt. xv. 19: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies," &c. There are many outward temptations and provocations that befall men, which excite and stir them up into these evils. But they do but as it were, open the vessel, and let out what is laid up and stored in it. The root, rise, and spring of all these things is in the heart. Temptations and occasions put nothing into a man, but only draw out what

was in him before. Hence is that summary description of the whole work and effect of this law of sin, Gen. vi. 5: "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually;" so also, chap viii. 21. The whole work of the law of sin, from its first rise, its first coining of actual sin, is here described; and its seat, its workhouse, is said to be the heart. And so it is called by our Saviour, "the evil treasure of the heart," Luke vi. 45. "An evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things." This treasure is the prevailing principle of moral actions that is in men. So in the beginning of the verse, our Saviour calls grace the good treasure of the heart of a good man, whence that which is good doth proceed. It is a principle constantly and abundantly inciting and stirring up to, and consequently bringing forth actions conformable, and like to it, of the same kind and nature with itself. And it is also called a treasure for its abundance. It will never be exhausted, it is not wasted by men's spending on it; yea, the more lavish men are of this stock, the more they draw out of this treasure, the more it grows and abounds: as men do not spend their grace, but increase it by its exercise, no more do they their indwelling sin. The more men exercise their grace in duties of obedience, the more it is strengthened and increased. And the more men exert and put forth the fruits of their lust, the more is that enraged and increased in them. It feeds upon itself, swallows up its own poison, and grows thereby. The more men sin the more they are inclined to sin. It is from the deceitfulness of this law of sin, whereof we shall speak afterwards at large, that men persuade themselves that by this or that particular sin, they shall

so satisfy their lusts, as that they shall need to sin no more. Every sin increases the principle, and fortifies the habit of sinning. It is an evil treasure that increases by doing evil. And where does this evil treasure lie? It is in the heart, there it is laid up, there it is kept in safety. All the men in the world, all the angels in heaven, cannot dispossess a man of this treasure, it is so safely stored in the heart.

The heart in the Scripture is variously used; sometimes for the mind and understanding; sometimes for the will; sometimes for the affections; sometimes for the conscience; sometimes for the whole soul. Generally, it denotes the whole soul of man, and all the faculties of it, not absolutely, but as they are all one principle of moral operations, as they all concur in our doing good or evil. The mind as it inquires, discerns, and judges what is to be done, what refused; the will, as it chooses, or refuses, and avoids; the affections as they like or dislike, cleave to, or have an aversion from, that which is proposed to them; the conscience as it warns, and determines, are altogether called the heart. And in this sense it is that we say the seat and subject of this law of sin is the heart of man. Only we may add, that the Scripture, speaking of the heart, as the principle of man's good or evil actions, does usually insinuate together with it two things belonging to the manner of their performance.

First, A suitableness and pleasingness to the soul in the things that are done. When men take delight, and are pleased in and with what they do, they are said to do it heartily, with their whole hearts. Thus when God himself blesses his people in love and delight, he says, he doth it with

"his whole heart, and his whole soul." Jer. xxxii. 41.

Secondly: Resolution and constancy in such actions. And this also is denoted in the metaphorical expression before used of a treasure, from whence men do constantly take out the things which either they stand in need of, or do intend to use.

This is the subject, the seat, the dwelling-place of this law of sin; the heart, as it is the entire principle of moral operations, of doing good or evil, as out of it proceeds good or evil. Here dwells our enemy: this is the fort, the citadel of this tyrant, where it maintains a rebellion against God all our days. Sometimes it has more strength, and consequently more success; sometimes less of the one than of the other, but is always in rebellion while we live.

That we may in our passage take a little view of the strength and power of sin from this seat and subject of it, we may consider one or two properties of the heart that exceedingly contribute thereunto. It is like an enemy in war, whose strength and power lie not only in his numbers, and force of men and arms, but also in the unconquerable forts that he does possess. And such is the heart to this enemy of God and our souls, as will appear from the properties of it, whereof one or two shall be mentioned.

First: It is unsearchable. Jer. xvii. 9, 10: "Who can know the heart? I the Lord search it." The heart of man is pervious to God only; hence he takes the honour of searching the heart to be as peculiar to himself, and as fully declaring him to be God, as any other glorious attribute of his nature. We know not the hearts of one another, we know

not our own hearts as we ought. Many there are that know not their own hearts as to their general bent and disposition, whether it be good or bad, sincere and sound, or corrupt and naught: but no one knoweth all the secret intrigues, the windings and turnings, the actings and aversions of his own heart. Hath any one the perfect measure of his own light and darkness? Can any one know what actings of choosing or aversion his will will bring forth, upon the proposal of that endless variety of objects that it is to be exercised with? Can any one traverse the various mutability of his affections? Do the secret springs of acting and refusing in the soul, lie before the eyes of any man? Does any one know what will be the motions of the mind or will in such and such conjunctions of things; such a suiting of objects, such a pretension of reasonings, such an appearance of things desirable? All in heaven and earth, but the infinite all-seeing God, are utterly ignorant of these things. In this unsearchable heart dwells the law of sin, and much of its security, and consequently of its strength, lies in this, that it is past our finding out. We fight with an enemy whose secret strength we cannot discover, whom we cannot follow in its retirements. Hence oftentimes, when we are ready to think sin quite ruined, after a while we find it was but out of sight. It hath covers and retreats in an unsearchable heart, whither we cannot pursue it. The soul may persuade itself all is well, when sin may be safe in the hidden darkness of the mind, which it is impossible that he should look into; for whatever makes manifest is light. It may suppose the will of sinning is utterly taken away, when yet there is an unsearchable reserve for a more suitable object, a more vigorous temptation than at pre-

sent it is tried with. Has a man had a contest with any lust, and a blessed victory over it by the Holy Ghost, as to that present trial? When he thinks it is utterly expelled, he ere long finds that it was but retired out of sight. It can lie so close in the mind's darkness, in the will's indisposition, in the disorder and carnality of the affections, that no eye can discover it. The best of our wisdom is but to watch its first appearances, to catch its first under earth heavings, and workings, and to set ourselves in opposition to them; for to follow it into the secret corners of the heart, that we cannot do. It is true, there is yet a relief in this case, namely, that he to whom the work of destroying the law of sin and body of death in us is principally committed, namely, the Holy Ghost, comes with his axe to the very root, neither is there any thing in an unsearchable heart that is not open and naked unto him. Heb. iv. 12. But we, in a way of duty, may hence see what an enemy we have to deal with.

Secondly: As it is unsearchable, so it is deceitful, as in the place above mentioned; it is deceitful above all things, incomparably so. There is great deceit in the dealings of men in the world, great in their counsels and contrivances, in reference to affairs private and public; great deceit in their words and actings: the world is full of deceit and fraud. But all this is nothing to the deceit that is in man's heart towards himself, for that is the expression in this place, and not towards others. Now incomparable deceitfulness, added to unsearchableness, gives a great addition and increase of strength, to the law of sin, upon the account of its seat and subject. I speak not yet of the deceitfulness of sin itself, but the deceitfulness of the heart where it is seated. Prov. xxvi. 25.

"There are seven abominations in the heart;" that is, not only many, but an absolute complete number, as seven denotes: and they are such abominations as consist in deceitfulness; so the caution foregoing insinuates, trust him not, for it is only deceit that should make us not to trust in that degree and measure which the object is capable of.

Now this deceitfulness of the heart, whereby it is exceedingly advantaged in its harbouring of sin, lies chiefly in these two things:

First; That it abounds in contradictions, so that it is not to be found and dealt with according to any constant rule, and way of procedure. There are some men that have much of this from their natural constitution, or from other causes in their conversation. They seem to be made up of contradictions; sometimes to be very wise in their affairs, sometimes very foolish; very open, and very reserved; very facile, and very obstinate; very easy to be entreated, and very revengeful, all in a remarkable height. This is generally accounted a bad character, and is seldom found but when it proceeds from some notable predominant lust. But in general, in respect of moral good or evil, duty or sin, it is so with the heart of every man: flaming hot, and key cold; weak, and yet stubborn; obstinate and facile. The frame of the heart is ready to contract itself every moment. Now you would think you had it all for such a frame, such a way: anon it is quite otherwise; so that none know what to expect from it. The rise of this is the disorder that is brought upon all its faculties by sin. God created them all in a perfect harmony and union. The mind and reason were in perfect subjection and subordination to God, and

his will; the will answered, in its choice of good, the discovery made of it by the mind; the affections constantly and evenly followed the understanding and will. The mind's subjection to God was the spring of the orderly and harmonious motion of the soul, and all the wheels in it. That being disturbed by sin, the rest of the faculties move cross and contrary one to another; the will chooses not the good which the mind discovers; the affections delight not in that which the will chooseth, but all jar and interfere, cross and rebel against each other. This we have got by our falling from God. Hence sometimes the will leads, the judgment follows. Yea, commonly the affections that should attend upon all, get the sovereignty, and draw the whole soul captive after them. And hence it is, as I said, that the heart is made up of so many contradictions in its actings. Sometimes the mind retains its sovereignty, and the affections are in subjection, and the will ready for its duty. This puts a good face upon things. Immediately the rebellion of the affections, or the obstinacy of the will, takes place, and prevails, and the whole scene is changed. This, I say, makes the heart deceitful above all things; it agrees not at all in itself, is not constant to itself, has no order that it is constant to, is under no certain conduct that is stable, but if I may so say, hath a rotation in itself where ofttimes the feet lead and guide the whole.

Secondly: Its deceit lies in its full promisings upon the first appearance of things. And this also proceeds from the same principle with the former. Sometimes the affections are touched and wrought upon, the whole heart appears in a fair frame, all promiseth to do well. Within a while the whole

frame is changed; the mind was not at all affected or turned; the affections a little acted their parts and are gone off, and all the fair promises of the heart are departed with them. Now add the deceitfulness to the unsearchableness before mentioned, and we shall find, that at least the difficulty of dealing effectually with sin in its seat and throne, will be exceedingly increased. A deceiving and a deceived heart, who can deal with it? especially considering that the heart employs all its deceits unto the service of sin, contributes them all to its furtherance. All the disorder that is in the heart, all its false promises, and fair appearances promote the interest and advantage of sin. Hence God cautions the people to look to it, lest "their own hearts should entice and deceive them."

Who can mention the treacheries and deceits that lie in the heart of man? It is not for nothing that the Holy Ghost so expresses it, "It is deceitful above all things;" uncertain in what it does, and false in what it promises. And hence moreover it is amongst other causes, that in the pursuit of our war against sin, we have not only the old work to do over and over, but new work still, while we live in this world; still new stratagems and wiles to deal withal, as the manner will be where unsearchableness and deceitfulness are to be contended with.

There are many other properties of this seat and subject of the law of sin, which might be insisted on to the same end and purpose, but that would too far divert us from our particular design; and therefore I shall pass these over with some few considerations.

Never let us reckon that our work in contending against sin, in crucifying, mortifying, and subduing

of it, is at an end. The place of its habitation is unsearchable, and when we may think that we have thoroughly won the field, there is still some reserve remaining that we saw not, that we knew not of. Many conquerors have been ruined by their carelessness after a victory; and many have been spiritually wounded after great successes against this enemy. David was so, his great surprise into sin was after a long profession, manifold experiences of God, and watchful keeping of himself from his iniquity. And hence in part hath it come to pass, that the profession of many hath declined in their old age, or riper time, which must more distinctly be spoken to afterwards. They have given over the work of mortifying of sin, before their work was at an end. There is no way for us to pursue sin in its unsearchable habitation, but by being endless in our pursuit. And that command of the apostle which we have, Col. iii. 5, on this account is as necessary for them to observe who are towards the end of their race, as those that are but at the beginning of it. "Mortify therefore your members that are on the earth;" be always doing it whilst you live in this world. It is true, great ground is obtained, when the work is vigorously and constantly carried on; sin is much weakened, so that the soul presses forwards towards perfection. But yet the work must be endless, I mean while we are in this world. If we give over, we shall quickly see this enemy exerting itself with new strength and vigour. It may be, under some great affliction, it may be in some eminent enjoyment of God, in the sense of the sweetness of blessed communion with Christ, we have been ready to say, that there was an end of sin, that it was dead and gone for ever. But have we not

found the contrary by experience? Hath it not manifested that it was only retired into some unsearchable recesses of the heart, as to its in-being and nature, though it may be greatly weakened in its power? Let us then reckon on it, that there is no way to have our work done, but by always doing of it; and he who dies fighting in this warfare, dies assuredly a conqueror.

Secondly: Hath it its residence in that which is various, inconstant, deceitful above all things? this calls for perpetual watchfulness against it. An open enemy that deals by violence only, always gives some respite; you know where to have him, and what he is doing, so as that sometimes you may sleep quietly without fear: but against adversaries that deal by deceit and treachery, (which are long swords, and reach at the greatest distance) nothing will give security but perpetual watchfulness. It is impossible we should in this case be too jealous, doubtful, suspicious, or watchful. The heart has a thousand wiles and deceits, and if we are in the least off from our watch, we may be sure to be surprised. Hence are those reiterated commands and cautions given for watching, for being circumspect, diligent, careful, and the like. There is no living for them who have to deal with an enemy deceitful above all things, unless they persist in such a frame. All cautions that are given in this case are necessary, especially that, remember not to believe it. Doth thy heart promise fair? rest not on it, but say to the Lord Christ, Lord, do thou undertake for me. Doth the sun shine fair in the morning? reckon not therefore on a fair day; the clouds may arise and fall; though the morning give a fair appearance of serenity and peace, turbulent affections may arise, and cloud the soul with sin and darkness.

Thirdly: Then commit the whole matter with all care and diligence unto him who can search the heart to the uttermost, and knows how to prevent all its treacheries and deceits. In the things before mentioned lies our duty, but here lies our safety. There is no treacherous corner in our hearts, but he can search it to the uttermost; there is no deceit in them, but he can disappoint it. This course David takes, Psal. cxxxix. After he had set forth the omnipresence of God, and his omniscience, Psal. cxxxix. 8, 9, 10, he makes improvement of it, ver. 23: "Search me, O Lord, and try me." As if he had said, It is but a little that I know of my deceitful heart, only I would be sincere, I would not have reserves for sin retained therein; wherefore do thou, who art present with my heart, who knowest my thoughts long before, undertake this work, perform it thoroughly, for thou alone art able so to do.

There are yet other arguments for the evidence of the power and strength of indwelling sin, from whence it is termed a law, which we must pass through according to the order, wherein before we laid them down

CHAPTER IV.

Indwelling Sin enmity against God—Thence its Power admits of no Peace nor Rest: Is against God himself; Acts itself in aversion from God, and propensity to Evil—Is Universal; to all of God; in all of the Soul; Constant.

We have seen the seat and subject of this law of sin. In the next place we might take a view of its

nature in general, which also will manifest its power and efficacy. But this I shall not enlarge upon; it being not my business to declare the nature of indwelling sin; it has also been done by others. I shall therefore only in reference to our special design in hand, consider one property of it, that belongs to its nature: and this always wherever it is. And this is that which is expressed by the apostle, "The carnal mind is enmity against God," Rom. viii. 7, that which is here called φρονημα της σαρκος the wisdom of the flesh, is the same with the law of sin, which we insist on. And what says he hereof? why it is εχθρα προς τον θεον, enmity against God. It is not only an enemy, for so possibly some reconciliation of it unto God might be made, but it is enmity itself, and not capable of accepting any terms of peace. Enemies may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. Yea, the only way to reconcile enemies is to destroy the enmity. So the apostle in another case tells us, "We who are enemies are reconciled unto God," Rom. v. 10, that is a work compassed and brought about by the blood of Christ; the reconciling of the greatest enemies. But when he comes to speak of enmity, there is no way for it, but it must be abolished and destroyed. "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity," Eph. ii. 15, there is no way to deal with any enmity whatever, but by its abolition or destruction.

And this also lies in it, as it is enmity, that every part and parcel of it, if we may so speak, the least degree of it that can possibly remain in any one, whilst, and where there is any thing of its nature, is enmity still. It may not be so effectual and powerful in operation, as where it has more life and vigour, but it is enmity still. As every drop of poi-

son is poison, and will infect; and every spark of fire is fire, and will burn; so is every thing of the law of sin, the last, the least of it; it is enmity, it will poison, it will burn. That which is any thing in the abstract is still so, whilst it has any being at all. Our apostle, who may well be supposed to have made as great a progress in the subduing of it, as any one on earth, yet after all, cries out for deliverance, as from an irreconcilable enemy. Rom. vii. 24. The meanest acting, the meanest and most imperceptible working of it, is the acting and working of enmity. Mortification abates of its force, but does not change its nature. Grace changes the nature of man, but nothing can change the nature of sin. Whatever effect be wrought upon it, there is no effect wrought in it, but that it is enmity still, sin still. Thus then by it is our state and condition. "God is love." 1 John iv. 8. He is so in himself, eternally excellent and desirable above all. He is so to us, he is so in the blood of his Son, and in all the inexpressible fruits of it, by which we are what we are, and wherein all our future hopes and expectations are wrapped up. Against this God we carry about us an enmity all our days. An enmity that has this, from its nature, that it is incapable of cure or reconciliation. Destroyed it may be, it shall be, but cured it cannot be. If a man hath an enemy to deal with that is too mighty for him, as David had with Saul, he may take the course that he did, consider what it is that provoked his enemy against him, and so address himself to remove the cause, and make up his peace. "If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering, but if they be the children of men, cursed be they of the Lord." 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. Come it from God or man, there is yet hope

of peace. But when a man has enmity itself to deal withal, nothing is to be expected but continual fighting, to the destruction of the one party. If it be not overcome and destroyed, it will overcome and destroy the soul.

And here lies no small part of its power which we are inquiring after; it can admit of no terms of peace, of no composition. There may be a composition where there is no reconciliation. There may be a truce where there is no peace. But with this enemy we can obtain neither the one nor the other. It is never quiet, conquering, nor conquered, which was the only kind of enemy of whom the famous warrior complained, of old. It is in vain for a man to have any expectation of rest from his lust, but by its death: of absolute freedom, but by his own. Some in the tumultuating of their corruptions, seek for quietness by labouring to satisfy them, "Making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof," as the apostle speaks, Rom. xiii. 14. This is to slake fire by wood and oil. As all the fuel in the world, all the fabric of the creation that is combustible, being cast into the fire, will not at all satisfy it, but increase it; so is it with satisfaction given to sin by sinning, it does but inflame and increase. If a man will part with some of his goods to an enemy, it may satisfy him; but enmity will have all, and is not one whit more satisfied, than if he had received nothing at all. Like the lean cattle, that were never the less hungry, for having devoured the fat. You cannot bargain with the fire to take but so much of your houses; ye have no way but to quench it. It is in this case as it is in the contest between a wise man and a fool, "whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest." Prov. xxix. 9 Whatever frame or temper

he be in, his importunate folly makes him troublesome. It is so with this indwelling sin, whether it rage or laugh, whether it violently tumultuate, as it will do on provocations and temptations, it will be outrageous in the soul; or whether it seem to be pleased and contented to be satisfied, all is one, there is no peace, no rest to be had with it, or by it. Had it then been of any other nature, some other way might have been fixed on, but since it consists in enmity, all the relief the soul hath must lie in its ruin.

Secondly: It is not only said to be enmity, but it is said to be enmity against God. It hath chosen a great enemy indeed. It is in sundry places proposed as our enemy: "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." 1 Pet. ii. 11. They are enemies to the soul, that is, to ourselves. Sometimes as an enemy to the spirit: "The flesh lusteth or fighteth against the Spirit." Gal. v. 17. It fights against the spirit, or the spiritual principle that is in us, to conquer it; it fights against our souls to destroy them. It has special ends and designs against our souls, and against the principle of grace that is in us; but its proper formal object is God, it is enmity against God. It is its work to oppose grace, it is a consequent of its work to oppose our souls, which follows upon what is does, more than what it intends; but its nature and formal design are to oppose God; God as the lawgiver, God as holy, God as the author of the gospel; a way of salvation by grace and not by works, is the direct object of the law of sin. Why does it oppose duty, "so that the good we would do, we do not," either as to matter or manner? Why does it render the soul carnal, indisposed, unbelieving, unspiritual, weary, wandering? It is because of

its enmity to God, whom the soul aims to have communion with in duty. It has, as it were, that command from Satan, which the Assyrians had from their king, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only the king of Israel." 1 Kings xxii. 31. It is neither great nor small, but God himself, the king of Israel, that sin sets itself against. There lies the secret formal reason of all its opposition to good, even because it relates unto God. If a road, a trade, a way of duties be set up, where a communion with God is not aimed at, but only the duty itself, as is the manner of men in most of their superstitious worship; the opposition that will lie against it from the law of sin will be very weak, easy and gentle. Or as the Assyrians, because of his show of a king, assaulted Jehoshaphat, but when they found that it was not Ahab, they turned back from pursuing him. Because there is a show and appearance of the worship of God, sin may make head against it at first, but when the duty cries out in the heart, that indeed God is not there; sin turns away to seek its proper enemy, even God himself, elsewhere. And hence do many poor creatures spend their days in dismal tiring superstitions, without any great reluctancy from within, when others cannot be suffered freely to watch with Christ in a spiritual manner one hour. And it is no wonder that men fight with carnal weapons for their superstitious worship without, when they have no fighting against it within. For God is not in it; and the law of sin makes no opposition to any duty, but to God in every duty. This is our state and condition; all the opposition that rises in us to any thing that is spiritually good, whether it be from darkness in the mind or aversion in the will, or sloth in the

affections, all the secret arguings and reasonings that are in the soul in pursuit of them, the direct object of them is God himself. The enmity lies against him, which considerations surely should influence us to a perpetual constant watchfulness over ourselves.

It is thus also in respect of all propensity to sin, as well as aversion from God. It is God himself that is aimed at. It is true, the pleasures, the wages of sin, do greatly influence the sensual carnal affections of men: but it is the holiness and authority of God, that sin itself rises up against: it hates the yoke of the Lord; "Thou hast been weary of me," saith God to sinners, and that during their performance of abundance of duties. Every act of sin is a fruit of being weary of God. Thus Job tells us, what lies at the bottom in the heart of sinners; "They say to the Lord, Depart from us:" it is enmity against him and aversion from him. Here lies the formal nature of every sin, it is an opposition to God, a casting off his yoke, a breaking off the dependence which the creature ought to have on the Creator. And the apostle gives the reason why he affirms "the carnal mind to be enmity against God;" namely, because "it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." Rom. viii. 7. It never is, nor will, nor can be subject to God, its whole nature consisting in an opposition to him. The soul wherein it is, may be subject to the law of God, but this law of sin sets up in contrariety to it, and will not be in subjection.

To manifest a little further the power of this law of sin from this property of its nature, that it is enmity against God, one or two inseparable adjuncts of it may be considered, which will further evince it.

First: It is universal; some contentions are limited unto some particular concerns, this is about one thing, that about another. It is not so here; the enmity is absolute and universal, as are all enmities that are grounded in the nature of the things themselves. Such enmity is against the whole kind of that which is its object. Such is this enmity; for, first; it is universal to all of God: and secondly, it is universal in all of the soul.

First, It is universal to all of God; if there were any thing of God, his nature, properties, his mind or will, his law or gospel, any duty of obedience to him, of communion with him, that sin had not an enmity against, the soul might have a constant shelter and retreat within itself, by applying itself to that of God, to that of duty towards him, to that of communion with him, that sin would make no opposition against. But the enmity lies against God, and all of God, and every thing wherein or whereby we have to do with him. It is not subject to the law, nor any part or parcel, word or title of the law. Whatever is opposite to any thing as such, is opposite to all of it. Sin is enmity to God as God, and therefore to all of God. Not his goodness, not his holiness, not his mercy, not his grace, not his promises; there is not any thing of him, which it doth not make head against; nor any duty, private, public, in the heart, in external works, which it opposes not. And the nearer (if I may so say) any thing is to God, the greater is its enmity unto it. The more of spirituality and holiness is in any thing, the greater is its enmity. That which has most of God, has most of its opposition. Concerning them in whom this law is predominant, God says, "Ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would have none of my

reproof." Prov. i. 25. Not this or that part of God's counsel, his mind, or will, is opposed, but all his counsel; whatever he calleth for, or guideth unto, in every particular of it, all is set at naught, and nothing of his reproof attended to. A man would think it not very strange that sin should maintain an enmity against God in his law, which comes to judge it, to condemn it; but it raises a greater enmity against him in his gospel, wherein he tenders mercy and pardon, as a deliverance from it, and that merely because more of the glorious properties of God's nature, more of his excellencies and condescensions, is manifested therein, than in the other.

Secondly, It is universal in all of the soul. Would this law of sin have contented itself to have subdued any one faculty of the soul, would it have left any one at liberty, any one affection free from its yoke and bondage, it might possibly have been with more ease opposed, or subdued. But when Christ comes with his spiritual power upon the soul to conquer it to himself, he has no quiet landing place. He can set foot on no ground but what he must fight for and conquer. Not the mind, nor an affection, not the will, but all is secured against him. And when grace has made its entrance, yet sin will dwell in all its coasts. Were any thing in the soul at perfect freedom and liberty, there a stand might be made to drive it from all the rest of its holds: But it is universal, and wars in the whole soul. The mind has its own darkness and vanity to wrestle with; the will its own stubbornness, obstinacy and perverseness; every affection its own frowardness and aversion from God, and its sensuality to deal withal; so that one cannot yield relief to another, as they ought; they have, as it were,

their hands full at home. Hence it is that our knowledge is imperfect, our obedience weak, love not unmixed, fear not pure, delight not free and noble. But I must not insist on these particulars, or I could abundantly show how diffused this principle of enmity against God is through the whole soul.

Secondly: Hereunto might be added its constancy. It is constant to itself, it wavers not, it has no thoughts of yielding or giving over, notwithstanding the powerful opposition that is made to it both by the law and gospel, as afterwards shall be shown.

This then is a third evidence of the power of sin taken from its nature and properties, wherein I have fixed but on one instance for its illustration, namely, that it is enmity against God, and that universal and constant. Should we enter upon a full description of it, it would require more space and time than we have allotted to this whole subject. What has been delivered may give us a little sense of it, if it be the will of God, and stir us up to watchfulness. What can be of a more sad consideration than that we should carry about us constantly that which is enmity against God, and that not in this or that particular, but in all that he is, and in all wherein he has revealed himself? I cannot say it is well with them who find it not. It is well with them indeed in whom it is weakened and the power of it abated. But yet for them who say it is not in them, they do but deceive themselves, and there is no truth in them.

CHAPTER V.

Nature of sin further discovered, as it is enmity against God —Its aversion from all good, opened—Means to prevent the effects of it prescribed.

We have considered somewhat of the nature of indwelling sin, not absolutely, but in reference to the discovery of its power. But this more clearly evidences itself in its actings and operations. Power is an act of life, and operation is the only discoverer of life. We know not that any thing lives, but by the effects and works of life. And great and strong operations, discover a powerful and vigorous life. Such are the operations of this law of sin, which are all demonstrations of its power.

That which we have declared concerning its nature, is, that it consists in enmity. Now there are two general heads of the working or operation of enmity. First, aversion. Secondly, opposition.

First, Aversion. Our Saviour describing the enmity that was between himself and the teachers of the Jews, by the effects of it, saith in the prophet, "my soul loathed them, and their soul abhorred me," Zech. xi. 8. Where there is mutual enmity, there is mutual aversion, loathing, and abomination. So it was between the Jews and the Samaritans; they were enemies and abhorred one another. John iv. 9.

Secondly, Opposition, or contending against one another, is the next product of enmity: "He was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them," Isa. lxiii. 10, speaking of God towards the

people. Where there is enmity, there will be fighting: it is the proper and natural product of it. Now both these effects are found in this law of sin.

First for aversion; there is an aversion in it to God, and every thing of God, as we have in part discovered in handling the enmity itself, and so shall not need much to insist upon it again. All indisposition to duty, wherein communion with God is to be obtained, all weariness of duty, all carnality, or formality under duty, it all springs from this root. The wise man cautions us against this evil: "When thou goest to the house of God, keep thy foot." Eccl. v. 1. Hast thou any spiritual duty to perform, and dost thou design the attaining any communion with God? look to thyself, take care of thy affections, they will be gadding and wandering, and that from their aversion to what thou hast in hand. There is not any good that we would do, wherein we may not find this aversion exercising itself. "When I would do good, evil is present with me." At any time, at all times, when I would do any thing that is spiritually good, it is present; that is, to hinder me, to obstruct me in my duty, because it abhors and loathes the thing which I have in hand, it will keep me off from it if possible. In them in whom it prevails, it comes at length unto that frame which is expressed in the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxxiii. 31. It will allow an outward bodily presence unto the worship of God, wherein it is not concerned, but it keeps the heart quite away.

It may be some will pretend, they find it not so in themselves, but they have freedom and liberty in and to all the duties of obedience that they attend to. But I fear, this pretended liberty will be found, upon examination, to arise from one or both

of these causes; first, ignorance of the true state and condition of their own souls, of their inward man and its actings toward God. They know not how it is with them, and therefore are not to be believed in what they report. They are in the dark, and neither know what they do, nor whither they are going. It is probable the Pharisee knew little of this matter, which made him boast of his duties to God himself. Or, secondly, it may be whatever duties of worship or obedience such persons perform, they may, through want of faith, and an interest in Christ, have no communion with God in them. And if so, sin will make but little opposition to them therein. We speak of them whose hearts are exercised with these things; and if, under their complaints of them, and groanings for deliverance from them, others cry out to them, Stand off, we are holier than ye, they are willing to bear their condition, as knowing that their way may be safe, though it be troublesome, and being willing to see their own dangers, that they may avoid the ruin which others fall into.

Let us then a little consider this aversion in such acts of obedience, as wherein there is no concernment but that of God and the soul. In public duties there may be a mixture of other considerations; they may be so influenced by custom and necessity, that a right judgment cannot, from them, be made of this matter. But let us take into consideration, the duties of retirement, as private prayer and meditation, and the like, or else duties to be performed in an extraordinary manner.

First: In these will this aversion and loathing oftentimes discover itself in the affections. A secret striving will be in them about close and cordial dealing with God. Unless the hand of God in his

Spirit be high and strong upon the soul, even when convictions, sense of duty, dear and real esteem of God, and communion with him, have carried the soul into its closet; yet, if there be not the vigour and power of spiritual life constantly at work, there will be a secret loathness in them unto duty; yea, sometimes there will be a violent inclination to the contrary; so that the soul had rather do any thing, embrace any diversion, though it wound itself thereby, than vigorously apply itself unto that which in the inward man it breathes after. It is weary before it begins, and says, When will the work be over? Here God and the soul are immediately concerned, and it is a great conquest to do what we would, though we come exceedingly short of what we should do.

Secondly: It discovers itself in the mind also. When we address ourselves to God in Christ, we are, as Job speaks, "to fill our mouths with arguments," Job xxiii. 4, that we may be able to plead with him, as he calls upon us to do; "Put me in remembrance, let us plead together." Isa. xliii. 26. Whence the church is called upon to take unto itself words or arguments, in going to God, Hosea xiv. 2. The sum is that the mind should be furnished with the considerations that are prevailing with God, and be in readiness to plead them, and to manage them in the most spiritual manner to the best advantage. Now is there no difficulty to get the mind into such a frame, as to lay out itself to the utmost in this work? to be clear, steady, and constant in its duty? to draw out, and make use of its stores and furniture of promises and experiences? It starts, wanders, flags, and all from its secret aversion unto communion with God, which proceeds from the law of indwelling sin. Some

complain that they can make no work of medita tion, they cannot bend their minds unto it. I confess there may be a great cause of this, in their want of a right understanding of the duty itself, and of the ways of managing the soul in it, which therefore I shall a little speak to afterwards. But yet this secret enmity has its hand in the loss they are at also, and that both in their minds and in their affections. Others are forced to live in family and public duties, they find such little benefit and success in private. And here has been the beginning of the apostasy of many professors, and the source of many foolish sensual opinions. Finding this aversion in their minds and affections from closeness and constancy in private spiritual duties, not knowing how to conquer and prevail against these difficulties through him who enables us, they have at first been subdued to a neglect of them; first partial, then total; until having lost all conscience of them, they have had a door opened to all sin and licentiousness, and so to a full and utter apostasy. I am persuaded there are very few that apostatize from a profession of any continuance, such as our days abound with, but their door of entrance into the folly of backsliding, was either some great and notorious sin that blooded their consciences, tainted their affections, and intercepted all delight of having any thing more to do with God; or else it was a course of neglect in private duties, arising from a weariness of contending against that powerful aversion which they found in themselves to them. And this also, through the craft of Satan has been improved into many foolish and sensual opinions of living unto God without and above any duties of communion. And we find that after men have for a while, choked and blinded their con-

sciences with this pretence, cursed wickedness, or sensuality has been the end of their folly. And the reason of all this is, that the giving way to the law of sin in the least, is the giving strength to it; to let it alone is to let it grow; not to conquer it, is to be conquered by it.

As it is in respect of private, so it is also in respect of public duties, that have any thing extraordinary in them. What strivings, strugglings, and pleadings are there in the heart about them, especially against the spirituality of them! Yea, in and under them, will not the mind and affections sometimes be entangled with things uncouth, new and strange to them, such as at the time of the least serious business, a man would not deign to take into his thoughts. But if the least loose, liberty, or advantage be given to indwelling sin, if it be not perpetually watched over, it will work to a strange and an unexpected issue. In brief, let the soul unclothe any duty whatever, private or public, any thing that is called good; let a man divest it of all outward respects, which secretly insinuate themselves into the mind, and give it some complacency in what it is about, but do not render it acceptable to God, and he shall assuredly find somewhat of the power, and some of the effects of this aversion. It begins in loathness and indisposition, goes on with entangling the mind and affections with other things, and will end, if not prevented, in weariness of God, which he complains of in his people. Isa. xliii. 22. They cease from duty, because they were weary of God.

But this instance being of great importance to professors, in their walking with God, we must not pass it over without some intimations of directions for them, in their contending against it, and oppo-

sition to it. Only this must be premised, that I am not giving directions for the mortifying of indwelling sin in general, which is to be done alone by the Spirit of Christ, by virtue of our union with him, Rom. viii. 13, but only of our particular duty, with reference to this special evil or effect of indwelling sin, that we have a little insisted on, or what in this single case, the wisdom of faith seems to direct to, and call for; which will be our way and course in our process upon the consideration of other effects of it.

First: The great means to prevent the fruits and effects of this aversion, is the constant keeping of the soul in a universally holy frame. As this weakens the whole law of sin, so answerably, all its properties; and particularly this aversion. It is this frame only that will enable us to say with the Psalmist, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." Psal. lvii. 7. It is utterly impossible to keep the heart in a prevailing holy frame in any one duty, unless it be so in and unto all and every one. If sin's entanglements get hold in any one thing, they will put themselves upon the soul in every thing.—A constant even frame and temper in all duties, in all ways is the only preservative for any one way. Let not him who is neglectful in public, persuade himself that all will be clear and easy in private, or on the contrary. There is a harmony in obedience: break but one part, and you interrupt the whole. Our wounds in particular, arise generally from negligence as to the whole course. So David informs us, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have a respect unto all thy commandments." Psal. cxix. 6. A universal respect to all God's commandments, is the only preservation from shame. And nothing have we more

reason to be ashamed of, than the shameful miscarriages of our hearts in point of duty, which are from the principle before mentioned.

Secondly: Labour to prevent the very beginnings of the workings of this aversion; let grace be beforehand with it in every duty. We are directed to "watch unto prayer," 1 Pet. iv. 7, and as it is unto prayer, so unto every duty; that is, to consider and take care that we be not hindered from within, nor from without, as to a due performance of it. Watch against temptations, to oppose them; watch against the aversion that is in sin, to prevent it. As we are not to give place to Satan, no more are we to sin. If it be not prevented in its first attempts, it will prevail. My meaning is, what ever good, as the apostle speaks, we have to do, and find evil present with us, as we shall find it present, prevent its parleying with the soul, its insinuating of poison into the mind and affections, by a vigorous, holy, violent stirring up of the grace or graces, that are to be acted and set at work peculiarly in that duty. Let Jacob come first into the world, or if prevented by the violence of Esau, let him lay hold on his heel to overthrow him, and obtain the birthright. Upon the very first motion of Peter to our Saviour crying, Master, spare thyself, he immediately replies, Get thee behind me, Satan. So ought we to say, Get thee gone, thou law of sin, thou present evil, and it may be of the same use unto us. Get grace then up betimes to duty, and be early in the rebukes of sin.

Thirdly: Though it do its worst, yet be sure it never prevail to a conquest. Be sure you be not wearied out by its pertinacity, nor driven from your hold by its importunity; do not faint by its opposition. Take the apostle's advice, "We desire

that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful. Heb. vi. 11. Still hold out in the same diligence. There are many ways whereby men are driven from a constant holy performance of duties, all of them dangerous, if not pernicious to the soul. Some are diverted by business, some by company, some by the power of temptations, some discouraged by their own darkness; but none so dangerous as this, when the soul gives over in part, or in whole, as wearied by the aversion of sin to it, or to communion with God in it. This argues the soul's giving up of itself to the power of sin, which, unless the Lord break the snare of Satan therein, will assuredly prove ruinous. Our Saviour's instruction is, that we ought "always to pray, and not to faint." Luke xviii. 1. Opposition will arise, none so bitter and keen as that from our own hearts; if we faint we perish. "Take heed lest you be wearied," saith the apostle, "and faint in your minds." Heb. xii. 3. Such a fainting as is attended with a weariness, and that with a giving place to the aversion working in our hearts, is to be avoided, if we would not perish. The caution is the same with that of the same apostle, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer." Rom. xii. 12. And in general with that other "let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lust thereof," chapter vi. 12. To cease from duty, in part, or in whole, upon the aversion of sin to its spirituality, is to give sin the rule, and to obey it in the lust thereof. Yield not then to it, but hold out the conflict: wait on God, and ye shall prevail: "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they

shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Isa. xl. 31. But that which is now so difficult, will increase in difficulty, if we give way to it. But if we abide in our station, we shall prevail, the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Fourthly: Carry about a constant humbling sense of this close aversion to spiritualness, that yet lies in our nature. If men find the efficacy of it, what should, what consideration can be more powerful to bring them to humble walking with God, than that after all the discoveries that God hath made of himself to them, all the kindness they have received from him, his doing of them good and not evil, in all things, there should yet be such a heart of unkindness and unbelief still abiding, as to have an aversion lying in it to communion with him. How ought the thoughts of it to cast us into the dust, to fill us with shame and self-abhorrence all our days? What have we found in God, in any of our approaches or addresses to him, that it should be thus with us? What iniquity have we found in him? Has he been a wilderness to us, or a land of darkness? Did we ever lose any thing by drawing nigh to him? Nay, has not therein lain all the rest and peace which we have obtained? Is not he the fountain and spring of all our mercies, of all our desirable things? Has he not bid us welcome at our coming? Have we not received from him more than heart can conceive, or tongue express? What ails then our foolish and wretched hearts, to harbour such a cursed secret dislike of him and his ways? Let us be ashamed and astonished at the consideration of it, and walk in an humbling sense of it all our days. Let us carry it about with us in the most secret of our thoughts. And as this is a duty in itself acceptable to God, who delights to

dwell with them that are of an humble and contrite spirit; so it is of exceeding efficacy to the weakening of the evil we are treating of.

Fifthly: Labour to possess the mind with the beauty and excellency of spiritual things, that so they may be presented lovely and desirable to the soul, and this cursed aversion of sin will be weakened thereby. It is an innate acknowledged principle, that the soul of man will not keep up cheerfully to the worship of God, unless it has a discovery of a beauty and comeliness in it. Hence when men had lost all spiritual sense and favour of the things of God, to supply the want that was in their own souls, they invented outwardly pompous and gorgeous ways of worship, in images, paintings, pictures, and I know not what carnal ornaments, which they have called the beauties of holiness. Thus much however was discovered therein, that the mind of man must see a beauty, a desirableness in the things of God's worship, or it will not delight in it; aversion will prevail. Let then the soul labour to acquaint itself with the spiritual beauty of obedience, of communion with God, and of all duties of immediate approach to him, that it may be filled with delight in them. It is not my present work to discover the heads and springs of that beauty and desirableness which is in spiritual duties, in their relation to God, the eternal spring of all beauty; to Christ, the love, desire, and hope of all nations; to the Spirit, the great beautifier of souls, rendering them by his grace, all glorious within, in their suitableness to the souls of men, as to their actings towards their last end, in the rectitude and holiness of the rule, in attendance whereunto they are to be performed; but I only say at present in general, that to acquaint the soul tho-

roughly with these things in an eminent way of weakening the aversion spoken of.

CHAPTER VI.

The work of this enmity against God, by way of opposition. First, it lusts—Wherein the lusting of sin consists—In surprising of the soul; readiness to close with temptations: its fighting and warring—(1.) In rebellion against the law of grace—(2.) In assaulting the soul.

How this enmity works by way of aversion, has been declared, as also the means that the soul is to use for the preventing of its effects and prevalency. The second way whereby it exerts itself is opposition. Enmity will oppose and contend with that wherewith it is at enmity. It is so in things natural and moral. As light and darkness, heat and cold, so virtue and vice oppose each other. So it is with sin and grace. Says the apostle, "these are contrary one to the other," αντικειται αλληλοις, Gal. v. 17; they are placed and set in mutual opposition, and that continually and constantly, as we shall see.

Now there are two ways whereby enemies manage an opposition. First, by force; and secondly, by fraud and deceit. So when the Egyptians became enemies to the children of Israel, and managed an enmity against them, Pharaoh said, "let us deal wisely," Exod. i. 10, or rather, cunningly and subtly with this people; for so Stephen, with respect to this word, expresses it by κατασοφισαμενος, Acts vii. 19, he used all manner of fraudulent sophistry. And to this deceit, they

added force, in their grievous oppressions. This is the way and manner of things where there is a prevailing enmity. And both these are made use of by the law of sin, in its enmity against God, and our soul.

I shall begin with the first; or its actings as it were in a way of force, in an open downright opposition to God and his law; or the good that a believing soul would do in obedience to God, and his law. And in this whole matter, we must be careful to steer our course aright, taking the Scripture for our guide, with spiritual reason and experience for our companions. For there are many shelves in our course, which must be diligently avoided, that none who consider these things, be troubled without a cause, or comforted without a just foundation.

In this first way, whereby this sin exerts its enmity in opposition, namely, as it were by force or strength, there are four things, expressing so many distinct degrees, in its progress and procedure in the pursuit of its enmity.

First, Its general inclination, it "lusteth." Gal. v. 17.

Secondly, Its particular way of contending, it "fights or wars." Rom. vii. 23; James iv. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 11.

Thirdly, Its success in this contest, it brings the soul into "captivity to the law of sin." Rom. vii. 23.

Fourthly, Its growth and rage upon success, it comes up to madness, Eccles. ix. 3, as an enraged enemy will do. All which we must speak to in order.

First, In general, it is said to lust. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit." Gal. v. 17. This word expresses the general nature of that opposition

which the law of sin makes against God, and the rule of his Spirit or grace in them that believe. And therefore the least degree of that opposition is expressed hereby. When it does any thing it lusts. As because burning is the general acting of fire, whatever it does else, it does also burn. When fire does any thing, it burns: and when the law of sin does any thing, it lusts.

Hence all the actings of this law of sin are called the lusts of the flesh. "Ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." Gal. v. 16. "Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Rom. xiii. 14. Nor are these lusts of the flesh those only whereby men act their sensuality in riot, drunkenness, uncleanness, and the like; but they comprehend all the actings of the law of sin whatever, in all the faculties and affections of the soul. Thus we have mention of the desires, or wills, or lusts of the mind, Ephes. ii. 3, as well as of the flesh. The mind, the most spiritual part of the soul, has its lusts, no less than the sensual appetite, which seems sometimes more properly to be called the flesh. And in the products of these lusts, there are defilements of the spirit, as well as of the flesh, 2 Cor. vii. 1; that is, of the mind and understanding, as well as of the appetite and affections, and the body that attends their service. And in the blamelessness of all these, consists our holiness. "The God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. v. 23. Yea, by the flesh in this matter, the whole old man, or the law of sin is intended; "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh," John iii. 6; that is, it is all so, and nothing else, and whatever remains of the old nature in the

new man, is flesh still. And this flesh lusts; this law of sin does so, which is the general bottom and foundation of all its opposition to God. And this it does two ways.

(1.) In a hidden close propensity to all evil This lies in it habitually. While a man is in the state of nature, fully under the power and dominion of this law of sin, it is said that "every figment of his heart is evil, and that continually." Gen. vi. 5. It can frame, fashion, produce, or act nothing but what is evil: because this habitual propensity to evil, that is in the law of sin, is absolutely predominant in such a one. It is in the heart, like poison, that has nothing to allay its venomous qualities, and so infects whatever it touches. And where the power and dominion of it is broken, yet, in its own nature, it has still an habitual propensity to that which is evil, wherein its lusting consists.

But here we must distinguish between the habitual frame of the heart, and the natural propensity or habitual inclination of the law of sin in the heart. The habitual inclination of the heart is denominated from the principle that bears chief or sovereign rule in it; and therefore in believers it is unto good, unto God, unto holiness, unto obedience. The heart is not habitually inclined to evil by the remainders of indwelling sin, but this sin in the heart has a constant habitual propensity to evil in itself, or its own nature. This the apostle intends by its being present with us; it is present with me, that is, always, and for its own end, which is to lust to sin.

It is with indwelling sin, as with a river; while the springs and fountains of it are open, and waters are continually supplied to its streams, set a dam

before it, and it causes it to rise and swell, until it bear down all, or overflow the banks about it. Let these waters be abated, dried up, in some good measure, in the springs of them, and the remainder may be checked and restrained. But still, as long as there is any running water, it will constantly press upon what stands before it, according to its weight and strength, because it is its nature so to do; and if by any means it make a passage, it will proceed. So is it with indwelling sin; while the springs and fountains of it are open, in vain is it for men to set a dam before it, by their convictions, resolutions, vows, and promises. They may check it for a while, but it will increase, rise high, and rage at one time or another, until it bears down all those convictions and resolutions, or makes itself an under-ground passage by some secret lust that shall give a full vent to it. But now suppose that the springs of it are much dried up by regenerating grace, the streams or actings of it abated by holiness; yet whilst any thing remains of it, it will be pressing constantly to have vent, to press forward into actual sin. And this is its lusting.

And this habitual propensity in it is discovered two ways.

1. In its unexpected surprisals of the soul into foolish sinful figments and imaginations, which it looked not for, nor was any occasion administered to them. It is with indwelling sin, as it is with the contrary principle of sanctifying grace. This gives the soul, if I may so say, many a blessed surprisal. It often ingenerates and brings forth a holy spiritual frame in the heart and mind, when we have had no previous rational considerations to work them thereunto. And this manifests it to be an habitual principle prevailing in the mind: so we

read, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me as the chariots of Amminadib," Cant. vi. 12, that is, free, willing, and ready for communion with Christ I knew not; it was done by the power of the Spirit of grace, so that I took no notice of it, as it were, until it was done. The frequent actings of grace in this manner, exciting acts of faith, love and complacency in God, are evidences of much strength and prevalency of it in the soul. And thus also it is with indwelling sin; ere the soul is aware, without any provocation or temptation, when it knows not, it is cast into a vain and foolish frame. Sin produces its figments secretly to the heart, and prevents the mind's consideration of what it is about. I mean hereby those first acts of the soul, which are thus far involuntary, as that they have not the actual consent of the will to them; but are voluntary, as far as sin has its residence in the will. And these surprisals, if the soul be not awake to take speedy care for the prevention of their tendency, do oftentimes set all, as it were, on fire, and engage the mind and affections into actual sin: for as by grace we are oftentimes, ere we are aware, made as the chariots of a willing people, and are far engaged in heavenly mindedness, and communion with Christ, making speed in it as in a chariot; so by sin are we oftentimes ere we are aware, carried into distempered affections, foolish imaginations, and pleasing delightfulness, in things that are not good nor profitable. Hence is that caution of the apostle, εαν προλημφθη, Gal. vi. 1. If a man be surprised unawares with a fault, or in a trangression, I doubt not but the subtlety of Satan, and the power of temptation, are there taken into consideration by the apostle, which causes him to express a man's falling into

sin, by εαν προλημφθη, if he be surprised: so this working of indwelling sin also has its consideration in it, and that in the chiefest place, without which nothing else could surprise us. For with the help thereof, whatever comes from without, from Satan, or the world, must admit of some parley in the mind, before it be received; but it is from within, from ourselves, that we are surprised. Hereby we are disappointed and wrought over to do that which we would not, and hindered from doing that which we would.

Hence it is, that when the soul is oftentimes doing, as it were, quite another thing, engaged quite upon another design, sin starts that in the heart, or imaginations of it, that carries it away into that which is evil and sinful. Yea, to manifest its power, sometimes when the soul is seriously engaged in the mortification of any sin, it will by one means or other lead it away into a dalliance with that very sin whose ruin it is seeking, and whose mortification it is engaged in. But as there is in this operation of the law of sin, a special enticing or entangling, we shall speak to it fully afterwards. Now these surprisals can be from nothing but an habitual propensity to evil in the principle from whence they proceed. Not an habitual inclination to actual sin in the mind or heart, but an habitual propensity to evil in the sin that is in the mind or heart. This prevents the soul with its figments. How much communion with God is hereby prevented, how many meditations are disturbed, how much the minds and consciences of men have been defiled by this acting of sin, some may have observed. I know no greater burden in the life of a believer, than these involuntary surprisals of soul; involuntary, I say, as to the actual consent

of the will, but not so in respect of that corruption which is in the will, and is the principle of them. And it is in respect to these, that the apostle utters his complaint. Rom. vii. 24.

2. This habitual inclination manifests itself in its readiness and promptness, without dispute or altercation, to join and close with every temptation, whereby it may possibly be excited. As we know it is in the nature of fire to burn, because it immediately lays hold on whatever is combustible. Let any temptation whatever be proposed to a man, the suitableness of whose matter to his corruptions, or manner of its proposal, makes it a temptation; immediately he has not only to do with the temptation, as outwardly proposed, but also with his own heart, about it. Without further consideration, or debate, the temptation has got a friend in him. Not a moment's space is given between the proposal, and the necessity there is incumbent on the soul to look to its enemy within. And this also argues a constant habitual propensity to evil. Our Saviour said of the assaults and temptations of Satan, "The prince of this world cometh, and he hath no part in me." John xiv. 30. He had more temptations intensively and extensively in number, quality and fierceness, from Satan and the world, than ever had any of the sons of men; but yet, in all of them, he had to deal only with that which came from without. His holy heart had nothing like to them, nothing suited to them, or ready to give them entertainment: "The prince of this world had nothing in him." So it was with Adam; when a temptation befell him, he had only the outward proposal of it to look to, all was well within, until the outward temptation took place, and prevailed. With us it is not so.

In a city that is at unity in itself, compact and entire, without divisions and parties, if an enemy approach about it, the rulers and inhabitants have no thoughts at all, but only how they may oppose the enemy without, and resist him in his approaches. But if the city be divided in itself, if there be factions and traitors within, the very first thing they do, is to look to the enemies at home, the traitors within: to cut off the head of Sheba, if they will be safe. All was well with Adam within doors, when Satan came, so that he had nothing to do but to look to his assaults and approaches. But now, on the access of any temptation, the soul is instantly to look in, where it shall find this traitor at work, closing with the baits of Satan, and stealing away the heart. And this it does always, which evinces an habitual inclination. David says, "I am ready to halt," Psalm xxxviii. 17, or for halting; I am prepared and disposed to hallucination, to the slipping of my foot into sin, Psalm xxxviii. 16, as he expounds the meaning of that phrase in another place, Psalm lxxiii. 2, 3. There was, from indwelling sin, a continual disposition in him to be slipping, stumbling, halting, on every occasion, or temptation. There is nothing so vain, foolish, ridiculous, fond: nothing so vile and abominable, nothing so atheistical or execrable, but if it be proposed to the soul in a way of temptation, there is that in this law of sin which is ready to answer it, before it be decried by grace. And this is the first thing in this lusting of the law of sin; it consists in its habitual propensity to evil, manifesting itself by the involuntary surprisals of the soul to sin, and its readiness, without dispute or consideration, to join with all temptations whatsoever.

(2.) Its lusting consists in its actual pressing after that which is evil, and actual opposition to that which is good. The former instances showed its constant readiness to this work; this now treats of the work itself. It is not only ready, but for the most part always engaged. It lusteth, saith the Holy Ghost, it does so continually. It stirreth in the soul, by one act or other, constantly, almost as the spirits in the blood, or the blood in the veins. This the Apostle calls its tempting: "Every man is tempted of his own lust." James i. 14. Now what is it to be tempted? It is to have that proposed to a man's consideration, which, if he close withal, it is evil, it is sin to him. This is sin's trade; επιθυμει, it lusteth. It is raising up in the heart, and proposing to the mind and affections, that which is evil: trying, as it were, whether the soul will close with its suggestions, or how far it may carry them on, though it do not wholly prevail. Now when such a temptation comes from without, it is to the soul an indifferent thing, neither good nor evil, unless it be consented to. But the very proposal from within, it being the soul's own act, is its sin. And this is the work of the law of sin; it is restlessly and continually raising up, and proposing innumerable various forms and appearances of evil, in this or that kind, indeed in every kind, that the nature of man is capable to exercise corruption in. Something or other, in matter, or manner, or circumstance, inordinate, unspiritual, unanswerable to the rule, it hatches and proposes to the soul. And this power of sin to beget figments and ideas of actual evil in the heart, the apostle may have respect to, 1 Thess. v. 22. Keep yourselves from every evil figment or idea ειδους of sin in the heart; for the word

there used does not any where signify an outward form or appearance: neither is it the appearance of evil, but an evil idea or figment that is intended. And this lusting of sin, is that which the prophet expresses in wicked men, in whom the law of it is predominant, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Isa. lvii. 20. A similitude, most lively expressing the lustings of the law of sin, restlessly and continually bubbling up in the heart, with wicked, foolish, and filthy imaginations and desires. This then is the first thing in the opposition that this enmity makes to God, namely, in its general inclination: it lusts.

Secondly: There is its particular way of contending, it fights or wars; that is, it acts with strength and violence, as men do in war. First, it lusts; stirring and moving inordinate figments in the mind, desires in the appetite and the affections, proposing them to the will. But it rests not there, it cannot rest: it urges, presses, and pursues its proposals with earnestness, strength, and vigour, fighting and contending, and warring to obtain its end and purpose. Would it merely stir up and propose things to the soul, and immediately acquiesce in the sentence and judgment of the mind, that the thing is evil, against God and his will, and not further to be insisted on, much sin might be prevented that is now produced. But it rests not here, it proceeds to carry on its design, and that with earnestness and contention. By this means, wicked men inflame themselves. Isa. lvii. 5. They are self inflamers, as the word signifies, unto sin; every spark is cherished in them, until it grows into a flame; and so it will do in others, where it is so cherished.

Now this fighting, or warring of sin, consists in two things:

(1.) In its rebellion against grace, or the law of the mind.

(2.) In its assaulting the soul, contending for rule and sovereignty over it.

The first is thus expressed by the apostle: "I find," says he, "another law rebelling against the law of my mind." Rom. vii. 23. There are, it seems, two laws in us, the law of the flesh, or of sin; and the law of the mind or of grace. But contrary laws cannot both obtain sovereign power over the same person, at the same time. The sovereign power in believers, is in the hand of the law of grace; so the apostle declares, "I delight in the law of God in the inward man," verse 22. Obedience to this law is performed with delight and complacency in the inward man, because its authority is lawful and good. So more expressly, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace," chap. vi. 14. Now to war against the law that has a just sovereignty, is to rebel; and so αντιστρατευεσθαι signifies; it is to rebel, and ought to have been so translated, 'rebelling against the law of my mind.' And this rebellion consists in a stubborn, obstinate opposition to the commands and directions of the law of grace. Does the law of the mind command any thing as duty? does it severely rise up against any thing that is evil? When the lusting of the law of sin rises up to this degree, it contends against obedience with all its might, the effect whereof, as the apostle tells us, is, the doing of that which we would not, and the not doing that which we would. Rom. vii. 15, 16. And we may gather a notable instance of the power of sin, in this its rebellion, from this place. The law of grace prevails upon the will, so that it would

do that which is good. "To will is present with me," verse 18. "When I would do good," verse 19, and again, verse 21, "And I would not do evil." And it prevails upon the understanding, so that it approves, or disapproves, according to the dictates of the law of grace: "I consent unto the law that it is good," verse 16. The judgment always lies on the side of grace. It prevails also on the affections: "I delight in the law of God in the inward man," ver. 22. Now if this be so, that grace has the sovereign power in the understanding, will, and affections, whence is it that it does not always prevail, that we do not always do that which we would, and abstain from that which we would not? Is it not strange that a man should not do that which he chooses, wills, likes, delights in? Is there any thing more required to enable us to that which is good? The law of grace does all, as much as can be expected from it, that which in itself is abundantly sufficient for the perfecting of all holiness in the fear of the Lord. But here lies the difficulty, in the entangling opposition that is made by the rebellion of this law of sin. Neither is it expressible, with what vigour and variety sin acts itself in this matter. Sometimes it proposes diversions, sometimes it causes weariness, sometimes it finds out difficulties, sometimes it stirs up contrary affections, sometimes it begets prejudices, and one way or another, entangles the soul, so that it never suffers grace to have an absolute and complete success in any duty. Rom. vii. 18. I find not the way perfectly to work out or accomplish that which is good; so the word signifies; and that from this opposition and resistance, that is made by the law of sin. Now this rebellion appears in two things.

1. In the opposition that it makes to the general purpose and course of the soul.

2. In the opposition that it makes to particular duties.

1. In the opposition it makes to the general purpose and course of the soul. There is none in whom is the Spirit of Christ, that is his, but it is his general design and purpose to walk in a universal conformity to him, in all things. Even from the inward frame of the heart, to the whole compass of his outward actions, so it is with him. This God requires in his covenant, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." Gen. xvii. 1. Accordingly, his design is to walk before God, and his frame is sincerity and uprightness therein. This is called, "cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart," Acts xi. 23; that is, in all things, and that not with a slothful, dead, ineffectual purpose, but such as is operative, and sets the whole soul at work in pursuit of it. This the apostle sets forth, when he says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14. He uses three words, excellently expressing the soul's universal pursuit of this purpose of heart in cleaving unto God. First, says he, "I follow after," prosecute: the word signifies properly to persecute, which, with what earnestness and diligence it is usually done, we know. Secondly, "I reach forward," reaching with great intenseness of

spirit and affections. It is a great and constant endeavour that is expressed in that word. Thirdly, "I press towards the mark," that is, even as men that are running for a prize. All set forth the vigour, earnestness, diligence and constancy that is used in the pursuit of this purpose. And this the nature of the principle of grace requires in them in whom it is. But yet we see with what failings, yea, fallings, their pursuit of this course is attended. The frame of the heart is changed, the heart is stolen away, the affections entangled, eruptions of unbelief and distempered passions discovered, carnal wisdom, with all his attendants, set on work; all contrary to the general principle and purpose of the soul. And all this is from the rebellion of this law of sin, stirring up and provoking the heart to disobedience. The prophet gives this character of hypocrites, "Their heart is divided, therefore shall they be found faulty." Hos. x. 2. Now though this be wholly so in respect of the mind and judgment in hypocrites only, yet it is partially so in the best, in the sense described. They have a division, not of the heart, but in the heart; and thence it is that they are so often found faulty. So saith the apostle, "So that we cannot do the things that we would." Gal. v. 17. We cannot accomplish the design of close walking, according to the law of grace, because of the contrariety and rebellion of this law of sin.

2. It rebels also in respect to particular duties. It raises a combustion in the soul, against the particular commandings and designings of the law of grace; "You cannot do the things that you would;" that is, the duties which you judge incumbent on you, which you approve and delight in, in the inward man; you cannot do them as you would.

Take an instance in prayer. A man addresses himself unto that duty: he would not only perform it, but he would perform it in that manner that the nature of the duty and his own condition do require. He would pray in the spirit, fervently, with sighs and groans that cannot be uttered; in faith, with love and delight, pouring forth his soul to the Lord; this he aims at. Now oftentimes he shall find a rebellion, a fighting of the law of sin in this matter. He shall find it difficult to get any thing done, who thought to do all things. I do not say that it is thus always; but it is so when sin wars and rebels, which expresses an especial acting of its power. Woful entanglements do poor creatures oftentimes meet withal upon this account. Instead of that free enlarged communion with God that they aim at, the best that their souls arrive to, is, but to go away mourning for their folly, deadness, and indisposition. In a word, there is no command of the law of grace, that is known, liked of, and approved by the soul; but when it comes to be observed, this law of sin, one way or other, makes head and rebels against it. And this is the first way of its fighting.

[2.] It does not only rebel and resist, but it assaults the soul; it sets upon the law of the mind and grace, which is the second part of its warring; they "fight or war against the soul," 1 Pet. ii. 11; "they fight or war in your members," James iv. 1. Peter shows what they oppose and fight against, namely, the soul, and the law of grace therein; James, what they fight with, or by, namely, the members, or the corruption that is in our mortal bodies. Αντιστρατευεσθαι, is to rebel against a superior; στρατευεσθαι, is to assault or war for superiority. It takes the part of an assailant as well as of

a resister. It makes attempts for rule and sovereignty, as well as opposes the rule of grace. Now all war and fighting has somewhat of violence in it, and there is, therefore, some violence in that acting of sin which the Scripture calls fighting and warring. And this assailing efficacy of sin, as distinguished from its rebelling, before treated of, consists in these things that ensue.

1. All its positive actings in stirring up to sin, belong to this head. Oftentimes, by the vanity of the mind, or the sensuality of the affections, or the folly of the imaginations, it sets upon the soul then when the law of grace is not actually putting it on duty, so that therein it does not rebel, but assault. Hence the apostle cries out, "Who shall deliver me from it?" Rom. vii. 24: who shall rescue me out of its hands? as the word signifies. When we pursue an enemy, and he resists us, we do not cry out, who shall deliver us? for we are the assailants; but, who shall rescue me? is the cry of one who is set upon by an enemy. So it is here; a man is assaulted by his own lusts, as James speaks. By the way-side, in his employment, under a duty, sin sets upon the soul with vain imaginations, foolish desires, and would willingly employ the soul to make provision for its satisfaction; which the apostle cautions us against. Rom. xiii. 14. Προνοιαν μη ποιεισθε, do not accomplish the providence or projection of the flesh for its own satisfaction.

2. Its importunity and urgency seem to be noted in this expression of its warring. Enemies in war are restless, pressing and importunate. So is the law of sin. Does it set upon the soul? cast off its motions, it returns again: rebuke them by the power of grace, they withdraw for a while, and return again. Set before them the cross of Christ,

they do as those who came to take him; at the sight of him they went backwards, and fell to the ground, but they arose again and laid hands on him. Sin gives place for a season, but returns and presses on the soul again. Mind it of the love of God in Christ, though it be stricken, yet it gives not over. Present hell fire to it, it rushes into the midst of those flames. Reproach it with its folly and madness, it knows no shame, but presses on still. Let the thoughts of the mind strive to fly from it, it follows as on the wings of the wind. And by this importunity it wearies and wears out the soul, and if the great Remedy, Rom. viii. 13, come not timely, it prevails to a conquest. There is nothing more marvellous nor dreadful in the working of sin, than this of its importunity. The soul knows not what to make of it; it dislikes, abhors, abominates the evil it tends to; it despises the thoughts of it, hates them as hell, and yet is by itself imposed on with them, as if it were another person, an express enemy got within him. All this the apostle discovers, "The things that I do I hate." Rom. vii. 15, 17. It is not of outward actions, but the inward risings of the mind, that he treats. I hate them, says he, I abominate them. But why then will he have any thing more to do with them? If he hate them, and abhor himself for them, let them alone, and have no more to do with them, and so end the matter. Alas! says he, "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Rom. vii. 17. I have one within me that is my enemy, that with endless restless importunity puts these things upon me, even the things that I hate and abominate; I cannot be rid of them, I am weary of myself, I cannot fly from them; "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" I do not say that

this is the ordinary condition of believers, but thus it is often when this law of sin rises up to war and fighting. It is not thus with them in respect of particular sins, this or that sin, outward sins, sins of life and conversation; but yet, in respect of vanity of mind, inward and spiritual distempers, it is often so. Some, I know, pretend to great perfection, but I am resolved to believe the apostle before them all and every one.

3. It carries on its war, by entangling of the affections, and drawing them into a combination against the mind. Let grace be enthroned in the mind and judgment, yet if the law of sin lays hold upon, and entangles the affections, or any of them, it has got a fort, from whence it continually assaults the soul. Hence the great duty of mortification is chiefly directed to take place upon the affections; "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry." Col. iii. 5. The members that are upon the earth, are our affections. For in the outward part of the body sin is not seated: in particular, not covetousness, which is there enumerated to be mortified amongst our members that are on the earth. Yea, after grace has taken possession of the soul, the affections do become the principal seat of the remainders of sin. And therefore Paul says, that this law is in our members, Rom. vii. 23, and James, that it wars in our members, James iv. 1; that is, our affections. And there is no estimate to be taken of the work of mortification aright, but by the affections. We may every day see persons of very eminent light, that yet visibly have unmortified hearts and conversations. Their affections have not been crucified with Christ. Now

then, when this law of sin can possess any affection, whatever it be, love, delight, fear, it will make, from it and by it, fearful assaults upon the soul. For instance, has it got the love of any one entangled with the world, or the things of it, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life?" how will it take advantage, on every occasion, to break in upon the soul. It shall do nothing, attempt nothing, be in no place, or company, perform no duty, private or public, but sin will have one blow or other at it; it will be one way or other soliciting for itself.

This is the sum of what we shall offer to this acting of the law of sin, in a way of fighting and warring against our souls, which is so often mentioned in the Scripture. And a due consideration of it is of no small advantage to us, especially to bring us to self-abasement, to teach us to walk humbly and mournfully before God. There are two things that are suited to humble the souls of men. And they are, first, a due consideration of God, and then of themselves; of God, in his greatness, glory, holiness, power, majesty, and authority: of ourselves, in our mean, abject, and sinful condition. Now of all things in our condition, there is nothing so suited to this end and purpose, as that which lies before us; namely, the vile remainders of enmity against God, which are yet in our hearts and natures. And it is no small evidence of a gracious soul, when it is willing to search itself in this matter, and to be helped therein from a word of truth; when it is willing that the word should dive into the secret parts of the heart, and rip open whatever of evil and corruption lies therein. The prophet says of Ephraim, "He loved to tread out the corn," Hos. x. 11; he loved to work when

he might eat, to have always the corn before him; but God says, he would cause him to plough; a labour no less needful, though at present not so delightful. Most men love to hear of the doctrine of grace, of the pardon of sin, of free love, and suppose they find food therein; however, it is evident that they grow and thrive in the life and notion of them. But to be breaking up the fallow ground of their hearts, to be inquiring after the weeds and briers that grow in them, they delight not so much; though this be no less necessary than the other. This path is not so beaten as that of grace, nor so trod in, though it be the only way to come to a true knowledge of grace itself. It may be, some who are wise and grown in other truths, may yet be so little skilled in searching their own hearts, that they may be slow in the perception and understanding of these things. But this sloth and neglect is to be shaken off, if we have any regard to our own souls. It is more than probable, that many false hypocrites, who have deceived themselves as well as others, because they thought the doctrine of the gospel pleased them, and therefore supposed they believed it, might be delivered from their soul-ruining deceits, if they would diligently apply themselves to this search of their own hearts. Or would other professors walk with so much boldness and security as some do, if they considered aright what a deadly watchful enemy they continually carry about with them, and in them? Would they so much indulge, as they do, carnal joys and pleasures; or pursue their perishing affairs with so much delight and greediness as they do? It were to be wished, that we would all apply our hearts more to this work, even to come to a true understanding of the nature, power, and

subtlety of this our adversary, that our souls may be humbled; and that,

First, In walking with God; his delight is with the humble and contrite ones, those that tremble at his word, the mourners in Zion, and such are we, only when we have a due sense of our own vile condition. This will beget reverence of God, sense of our distance from him, admiration of his grace and condescension, a due valuation of mercy, far above those light, verbal, airy attainments that some have boasted of.

Secondly, In walking with others: It lays in provision to prevent those great evils of judging, spiritual unmercifulness, harsh censuring, which I have observed to have been pretended by many, who at the same time, as afterwards has appeared, have been guilty of greater or worse crimes than those which they have raved against in others. This, I say, will lead us to meekness, compassion, readiness to forgive, to pass by offences, even when we shall consider what is our state, as the apostle plainly declares, Gal. vi. 1. The man that understands the evil of his own heart, how vile it is, is the only useful, fruitful, and solidly believing and obedient person. Others are fit only to delude themselves, to disquiet families, churches and all relations whatever. Let us then consider our hearts wisely, and then go and see if we can be proud of our gifts, our graces, our valuation and esteem among professors, our enjoyments. Let us go then and judge, condemn, reproach others that have been tempted; we shall find a great inconsistency in these things. And many things of the like nature might be here added, upon the consideration of this woful effect of indwelling sin. The way of opposing and defeating its design herein shall be afterwards considered.

CHAPTER VII.

The captivating Power of Indwelling Sin, wherein it consisteth—The prevalency of Sin, when from itself, when from Temptation—The Rage and Madness that is in Sin.

The third thing assigned unto this law of sin in its opposition to God, and the law of his grace, is that it leads the soul captive, "I find a law leading me captive (captivating me) unto the law of sin." Rom. vii. 23. And this is the utmost height to which the apostle in that place carries the opposition and warring of the remainders of indwelling sin; closing the consideration of it with a complaint of the state and condition of believers thereby; and an earnest prayer for deliverance from it. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death." What is contained in this expression, and intended by it, shall be declared in the ensuing observations.

[1.] It is not directly the power and actings of the law of sin that are here expressed, but its success in and upon its actings. But success is the greatest evidence of power, and leading captive in war is the height of success. None can aim at greater success, than to lead their enemies captive. And it is a peculiar expression, in the Scripture, of the great success. So the Lord Christ on his victory over Satan, is said to have "led captivity captive." Ephes. iv. 8. That is, to conquer him who had conquered and prevailed over others. And this he did, when by death he "destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil." Heb. ii. 14. Here then a great prevalency and power of sin, in

its warring against the soul, is discovered. It so wars, as to lead captive; which, had it not great power, it could not do, especially against that resistance of the soul, which is included in this expression.

[2.] It is said that it leads the soul captive unto the law of sin. Not to this or that sin, particular sin, actual sin, but to the law of sin. God, for the most part, orders things so, and gives out such supplies of grace unto believers, as that they shall not be made a prey unto this or that particular sin, that it should prevail in them, and compel them to serve it in the lusts thereof, that it should have dominion over them, that they should be captives and slaves to it. This is that which David prays so earnestly against. "Cleanse thou me from secret faults; keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me, then shall I be upright." Psal. xix. 12, 13. He supposes the continuance of the law of sin in him, ver. 12, which will bring forth errors of life; and secret sins, against which he finds relief in pardoning and cleansing mercy, which he prays for. This, says he, will be my condition. But for sins of pride and boldness, such as all sins are that get dominion in a man, that make a captive of a man, the Lord restrain thy servant from them. For what sin soever gets such power in a man, be it in its own nature small or great, it becomes in him in whom it is, a sin of boldness, pride, and presumption. For these things are not reckoned from the nature or kind of the sin, but from its prevalency and customariness, wherein its pride, boldness, and contempt of God does consist. To the same purpose, if I mistake not, prays Jabez, "O that thou wouldst bless me indeed; and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand

may be with me, and that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me." 1 Chron. iv. 10. The holy man took occasion from his own name to pray against sin, that it might not be a grief and sorrow to him, by its power and prevalency. I confess, sometimes it may come to this with a believer, that for a season he may be led captive by some particular sin. It may have so much prevalency in him, as to have power over him. So it seems to have been with David when he lay so long in his sin without repentance. And it was plainly so with those of whom God speaks in the prophet, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him, I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart; I have seen his ways, and will heal him." Isa. lvii. 17, 18. They continued under the power of their covetousness: so that no dealings of God with them, for so long a time could reclaim them. But, for the most part, when any lust or sin does so prevail, it is from the advantage and furtherance that it has got by some powerful temptation of Satan. He has poisoned it, inflamed it, and entangled the soul. So the apostle, speaking of such as through sin were fallen off from their holiness, says, "They were in the snare of the Devil, being taken captive by him at his will." 2 Tim. ii. 26. Though it were their own lusts that they served, yet they were brought into bondage thereunto, by being entangled in some snare of Satan, and thence they are said to be taken alive, as a poor beast in a toil.

And here by the way, we may a little inquire, whether the prevailing power of a particular sin in any, be from itself, or from the influence of temp-

tation upon it; concerning which, at present take only these two observations.

1. Much of the prevalency of sin upon the soul, is certainly from Satan, when the perplexing and captivating sin has no peculiar footing, nor advantage in the nature, constitution or condition of the sinner. When any lust grows high and prevailing, more than others, upon its own account, it is from the peculiar advantage that it has in the natural constitution, or the station, or condition of the person in the world. For otherwise the law of sin gives an equal propensity to all evil, an equal vigour unto every lust. When, therefore, it cannot be discerned that the captivating sin is peculiarly fixed in the nature of the sinner, or is advantaged from his education or employment in the world, the prevalency of it is peculiarly from Satan. He has got to the root of it, and has given it poison and strength. Yea, perhaps, sometimes that which may seem to the soul to be the corrupt lusting of the heart, is nothing but Satan's imposing his suggestions on the imagination. If, then, a man find an importunate rage from any corruption, that is not evidently seated in his nature, let him fly by faith to the cross of Christ, for the devil is nigh at hand.

2. When a lust is prevalent to captivity, where it brings in no advantage to the flesh, it is from Satan. All that the law of sin does of itself, is to serve the providence of the flesh, Rom. xiii. 14; and it must bring in to it somewhat of the profits and pleasures that are its object. Now if the prevailing sin do not so act itself, if it be more spiritual and inward, it is much from Satan by the imagination, more than the corruption of the heart itself. But this by the way.

I say then, that the apostle treats not here of our being captivated unto this or that sin, but unto the law of sin. That is, we are compelled to bear its presence and burden whether we will or no. Sometimes the soul thinks, or hopes, that it may, through grace, be utterly freed from this troublesome inmate. Upon some sweet enjoyment of God, some full supply of grace, some return from wandering, some deep affliction, some thorough humiliation, the poor soul begins to hope that it shall now be freed from the law of sin. But, after a while it perceives that it is quite otherwise. Sin acts again, makes good its old station, and the soul finds that whether it will or no, it must bear its yoke. This makes it sigh and cry out for deliverance.

[3.] This leading captive argues a prevalency against the contrary actings of the will. This is intimated plainly in this expression, namely, that the will opposes and makes head as it were, against the workings of sin. This the apostle declares in those expressions which he uses in the 15th, 19th, and 20th verses. And herein consists the lusting of the spirit against the flesh, Gal. v. 17; that is, the contending of grace to expel and subdue it. The spiritual habits of grace that are in the will, do so resist and act against it; and the excitation of those habits by the Spirit are directed to the same purpose. This leading captive is contrary, I say, to the inclinations and actings of the renewed will. No man is made a captive but against his will. Captivity is misery and trouble, and no man willingly puts himself into trouble. Men choose it in its causes, and in the ways and means leading to it, but not in itself. So the prophet informs us, Ephraim was not willingly "oppressed and broken in judgment," Hos. v. 11, that was his misery and

trouble; but he willingly walked after the idolatrous kings, which brought him thereunto. Whatever consent then the soul may give to sin, which is the means of this captivity, it gives none to the captivity itself; that is against the will wholly. Hence these things ensue.

1. That the power of sin is great: which is that which we are in the demonstration of: and this appears in its prevalency to captivity, against the actings and contendings of the will for liberty from it. Had it no opposition made to it, or were its adversary weak, negligent, slothful, it were no great evidence of its power, that it made captives. But its prevailing against diligence, activity, watchfulness, the constant opposition of the will, this evinces its efficacy.

2. This leading captive intimates manifold particular successes. Had it not success in particular, it could not be said at all to lead captive. Rebel it might, assail it might, but it cannot be said to lead captive without some successes. And there are several degrees of success of the law of sin in the soul. Sometimes it carries the person to outward actual sin, which is its utmost aim. Sometimes it obtains the consent of the will, but is cast out by grace, and proceeds no further. Sometimes it wearies and entangles the soul, that it turns aside as it were, and leaves contending, which is a success also. One, or more, or all of these must be where captivity takes place. Such a kind of course does the apostle ascribe to covetousness. 1 Tim. vi. 9.

3. This leading captive manifests this condition to be miserable and wretched. To be thus yoked and dealt withal against the judgment of the mind, the choice and consent of the will, its utmost striv-

ings and contendings, how sad is it! When the neck is sore and tender with former pressures, to be compelled to wear the yoke again, this pierces, this grieves, this even breaks the heart. When the soul is principled by grace to a loathing of sin, of every evil way, to a hatred of the least discrepancy between itself and the holy will of God, then to be imposed on by this law of sin, with all that enmity and folly, that deadness and filth, wherewith it is attended: what more dreadful condition? All captivity is dreadful in its own nature: the greatest aggravation of it is from the condition of the tyrant to whom any one is captivated. Now what can be worse than this law of sin? Hence the apostle, having once mentioned this captivity, cries out as one quite weary and ready to faint, ver. 24.

4. This condition is peculiar to believers. Unregenerate men are not said to be led captive to the law of sin. They may, indeed, be led captives to this or that particular sin or corruption; that is, they may be forced to serve it against the power of their convictions. They are convinced of the evil of it; an adulterer of his uncleanness, a drunkard of his abomination; and make some resolutions, it may be, against it; but their lust is too hard for them; they cannot cease to sin, and so are made captives or slaves to this or that particular sin. But they cannot be said to be led captive to the law of sin, and that because they are willingly subject thereunto. It has, as it were, a rightful dominion over them, and they oppose it not, but only when it has irruptions to the disturbance of their consciences. And then the opposition they make to it is not from their wills, but is the mere acting of an affrighted conscience, and a convinced mind. They regard not the nature of sin, but its guilt and

consequences. But to be brought into captivity, is that which befalls a man against his will. Which is all that shall be spoken to this degree of the actings of the power of sin, manifesting itself in its success.

The fourth and last degree of the opposition made by the law of sin to God, and the law of his will and grace, is in its rage and madness. There is madness in its nature. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart." Eccl. ix. 3. The evil that the heart of man is full of by nature, is that indwelling sin whereof we speak. And this is so in their heart, that it riseth up to madness. The Holy Ghost expresses this rage of sin by a fit similitude, which he uses in sundry places. Jer. ii. 24. It maketh men as a wild ass; she traverseth her ways, and snuffeth up the wind, and runneth whither her mind or lust leads her. And he says of idolaters, enraged with their lust, that they "are mad upon their idols," Jer. l. 38; Hos. viii. 9. We may a little consider what lies in this madness and rage of sin, and how it rises up thereunto.

[1.] For the nature of it, it seems to consist in a violent, heady, pertinacious pressing to evil or sin. Violence, importunity, and pertinacity are in it. It is the tearing and torturing of the soul by any sin, to force its consent, and to obtain satisfaction. It rises up in the heart, is denied by the law of grace, and rebuked; it returns and exerts its poison again; the soul is startled, casts it off; it returns again with new violence and importunity; the soul cries out for help and deliverance, looks round about to all springs of gospel grace and relief, trembles at the furious assaults of sin, and casts itself into the arms of Christ for deliverance.

And if it be not able to take that course, it is foiled and hurried up and down through the mire and filth of foolish imaginations, corrupt and noisome lusts, which rend and tear it, as if they would devour its whole spiritual life and power. 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10; 2 Pet. ii. 14. It was not much otherwise with them whom we instanced before, Isa. lvii. 17; they had an inflamed enraged lust working in them; even covetousness, or the love of this world; by which, as the apostle speaks, men "pierce themselves through with many sorrows." God is angry with them, and discovers his wrath by all the ways and means that it was possible for them to be made sensible thereof. He was wroth and smote them; but though, it may be, this staggered them a little, yet they went on. He is angry, and hides himself from them; deserts them as to his gracious assisting, comforting presence. Doth this work the effect? No, they go on frowardly still, as men mad on their covetousness. Nothing can put a stop to their raging lusts. This is plain madness and fury. We need not seek far for instances; we see men mad on their lusts every day; and, which is the worst kind of madness, their lusts do not rage so much in them, as they rage in the pursuit of them. Are those greedy pursuits of things in the world, which we see some men engaged in, though they have other pretences, indeed any thing else but plain madness in the pursuit of their lusts? God, who searches the hearts of men, knows that the most of things that are done, with other pretences in the world, are nothing but the actings of men, mad and furious in the pursuit of their lusts.

[2.] That sin arises not unto this height ordinarily, but when it has got a double advantage.

1. That it be provoked, enraged, and heightened

by some great temptation. Though it be a poison in itself, yet being inbred in nature, it grows not violently outrageous, without the contribution of some new poison of Satan to it, in a suitable temptation. It was the advantage that Satan got against David, by a suitable temptation, that raised his lusts to that rage and madness that it went forth to in the business of Bathsheba and Uriah. Though sin be always a fire in the bones, yet it flames not, unless Satan come with his bellows to blow it up.—And let any one in whom the law of sin arises to this height of rage, seriously consider, and he may find out where the Devil stands, and puts in, in this business.

2. It must be advantaged by some former entertainment and prevalency. Sin grows not to this height at its first assault. Had it not been suffered to make its entrance, had there not been some yielding in the soul, this had not come about. The great wisdom and security of the soul in dealing with indwelling sin, is to put a violent stop to its beginnings, its first motions and actings. Venture all on the first attempt. Die rather than yield one step to it. If, through the deceit of sin, or the negligence of the soul, or its carnal confidence to give bounds to the actings of lust at other seasons, it makes any entrance into the soul, and finds any entertainment, it gets strength and power, and insensibly arises to the frame under consideration. Thou hadst never had the experience of the fury of sin, if thou hadst not been content with some of its dalliances. Hadst thou not brought up this servant, this slave, delicately, it would not have now presumed beyond a son. Now when the law of sin, in any particular, has got this double advantage, the furtherance of a vigorous temptation, and

some prevalency formerly obtained, whereby it is let into the strengths of the soul, it often rises up to this frame whereof we speak.

[3.] We may see what accompanies this rage and madness, what are the properties of it, what effects it produces.

1. There is in it the casting off, for a time, at least, of the yoke, rule and government, of the spirit and law of grace. Where grace has the dominion, it will never utterly be expelled from its throne, it will still keep its right and sovereignty. But its influences may, for a season, be intercepted, and its government be suspended, by the power of sin. Can we think that the law of grace had any actual influence of rule on the heart of David, when upon the provocation received from Nabal, he was so hurried with the desire of self-revenge, that he cried to his companions, Gird on your swords, and resolved not to leave alive one man of his whole household? 1 Sam. xxv. 34. Or that Asa was in any better frame when he smote the prophet, and put him in prison, that spoke unto him in the name of the Lord. 2 Chron. xvi. 10. Sin in this case, is like an untamed horse, which having first cast off his rider, runs away with fierceness and rage. It first casts off a present sense of the yoke of Christ, and the law of his grace, and then hurries the soul at its pleasure. Let us a little consider how this is done.

The seat and residence of grace is in the whole soul; it is the inner man. it is in the mind, the will, and the affections; for the whole soul is renewed by it unto the image of God. Eph. iv. 23, 24. And the whole man is a new creature. 2 Cor. v. 17. And in all these does it exert its power and efficacy. Its rule or dominion is the pursuit of its

effectual working in all the faculties of the soul, as they are one united principle of moral and spiritual operations. So then. the interrupting of its exercise, of its rule and power, by the law of sin, must consist in its contrary acting in and upon the faculties and affections of the soul, whereon, and by which, grace should exert its power and efficacy. And this it doth. It darkens the mind, partly through innumerable vain prejudices, and false reasonings, as we shall see when we come to consider its deceitfulness; and partly through the steaming of the affections, heated with the noisome lusts that have laid hold on them. Hence that saving light that is in the mind is clouded and stifled, that it cannot put forth its transforming power, to change the soul into the likeness of Christ discovered unto it, which is its proper work. Rom. xii. 2. The habitual inclination of the will to obedience, which is the next way of the working of the law of grace, is first weakened, then cast aside, and rendered useless by the continual solicitations of sin and temptation; so that the will first lets go its hold, and disputes whether it shall yield or no; and at last gives up itself to its adversary; and for the affections, commonly the beginning of this evil is in them. They cross one another, and torture the soul with their impetuous violence. By this way is the rule of the law of grace intercepted by the law of sin, even by imposing upon it in the whole seat of its government. When this is done, it is sad work that sin will make in the soul. The apostle warns believers to take heed thereof: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Rom. vi. 12. Look to it that it get not the dominion, that it usurp

not rule, no not for a moment. It will labour to intrude itself into the throne, watch against it, or a woful state and condition lies at the door. This then accompanies this rage and madness of the law of sin. It casts off, during its prevalency, the rule of the law of grace wholly. It speaks in the soul, but is not heard; it commands the contrary, but is not obeyed. It cries out, Do not this abominable thing which the Lord hateth, but is not regarded; that is, not so far as to be able to put a present stop to the rage of sin, and to recover its own rule, which God, in his own time, restores to it, by the power of his Spirit dwelling in us.

2. Madness or rage is accompanied with fearlessness and contempt of danger. It takes away the power of consideration, and all that influence that it ought to have upon the soul. Hence sinners that are wholly under the power of this rage, are said, to "run upon God, and the thick bosses of his buckler," Job xvi. 21, that wherein he is armed for their utter ruin. They despise the utmost that he can do to them, being secretly resolved to accomplish their lusts, though it cost them their souls. Some few considerations will further clear this to us.

(1.) Oftentimes, when the soul is broken loose from the power of renewing grace, God deals with it to keep it within bounds by preventing grace. So the Lord declares that he will deal with Israel. Hos. ii. 6; seeing thou hast rejected me, I will take another course with thee; I will lay obstacles before thee, that thou shalt not be able to pass on, whither the fury of thy lusts would drive thee. He will oppose that to them from without, that shall obstruct them in their progress.

(2.) These hindrances that God lays in the way

of sinners, as shall be afterwards at large declared are of two sorts.

First: Rational considerations, taken from the consequences of the sin and evil that the soul is solicited to, and perplexed withal. Such are the fear of death, judgment, and hell, falling into the hands of the living God, who is a consuming fire. Whilst a man is under the power of the law of the spirit of life, the "love of Christ constraineth him." 2 Cor. v. 14. The principle of his doing good, and abstaining from evil, is faith working by love, accompanied with a following of Christ, because of the sweet savour of his name. But now, when this blessed easy yoke is for a season cast off, so as was manifested before, God sets a hedge of terror before the soul, minds it of death and judgment to come, flashes the flames of hell-fire in the face, fills the soul with consideration of all the evil consequences of sin, to deter it from its purpose. To this end does he make use of all the threatenings recorded in the law and the gospel. To this head also, may be referred all the considerations that may be taken from things temporal, as shame, reproach, scandal, punishments, and the like. By the consideration of these things, I say, does God set a hedge before them.

Secondly: Providential dispensations are used by the Lord to the same purpose, and these are of two sorts.

1. Such as are suited to work upon the soul, and to cause it to desist and give over in its lustings and pursuit of sin. Such are afflictions and mercies. "I was wroth and I smote them." Isa. lvii. 17. I testified my dislike of their ways by afflictions. Hos. ii. 9, 11, 12. God chastens men with pains on their bodies, saith he, in Job, "to turn

them from their purpose, and to hide sin from them." Job xxxiii. 17, 19. And other ways he has to come to them and touch them, as in their names, relations, estates, and desirable things. Or else he heaps mercies on them, that they may consider whom they are rebelling against. It may be, signal distinguishing mercies are made their portion for many days.

2. Such as actually hinder the soul from pursuing sin, though it be resolved so to do. The various ways whereby God does this, we must afterwards consider.

These are the ways, I say, whereby the soul is dealt withal, after the law of indwelling sin has cast off, for a season, the influencing power of the law of grace. But now when lust rises up to rage or madness, it will also contemn all these, even the rod and him that has appointed it. It will rush on shame, reproaches, wrath, and whatever may befall it. That is, though they be presented to it, it will venture upon them all. Rage and madness is fearless. And this it does two ways.

First: It possesses the mind, that it suffers not the consideration of these things to dwell upon it, but renders the thoughts of them slight and evanescent. Or if the mind do force itself to a contemplation of them, yet it interposes between it and the affections, that they shall not be influenced by it, in any proportion to what is required. The soul in such a condition, will be able to take such things to contemplation, and not at all to be moved by them. And where they do prevail for a season, yet they are insensibly wrought off from the heart again.

Secondly: By secret stubborn resolves to venture upon the way wherein it is.

And this is the second branch of this evidence of

the power of sin, taken from the opposition that it makes to the law of grace, as it were, by the way of force, strength, and violence. The consideration of its deceit now follows.

CHAPTER VIII.

Indwelling sin proved powerful from its deceit—Proved to be deceitful—The general nature of deceit, James i. 14, opened—How the mind is drawn off from its duty by the deceitfulness of sin—The principal duties of the mind in our obedience—The ways and means whereby it is turned from it.

The second part of the evidence of the power of sin from its manner of operation, is taken from its deceitfulness. It adds, in its working, deceit to power. The efficacy of that must needs be great, and is carefully to be watched against, by all such as value their souls, where power and deceit are combined; especially advantaged and assisted by all the ways and means before insisted on.

Before we come to show wherein the nature of this deceitfulness of sin does consist, and how it prevails thereby, some testimonies shall be briefly given in to the thing itself, and some light into the general nature of it.

That sin, indwelling sin, is deceitful, we have the express testimony of the Holy Ghost: "Take heed that ye be not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Heb. iii. 13. Deceitful it is, take heed of it, watch against it, or it will produce its utmost effect, in hardening of the heart against God. It

is on the account of sin, that the heart is said to be "deceitful above all things." Jer. xvii. 9. Take a man in other things, and, as Job speaks, though he "would be wise and crafty, he is like the wild ass's colt," Job xi. 12, a poor, vain, empty, nothing. But consider his heart, on the account of this law of sin, it is crafty and deceitful above all things. "They are wise to do evil," says the prophet, "but to do good they have no knowledge." Jer. iv. 22. To the same purpose speaks the apostle, "The old man is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts." Ephes. iv. 22. Every lust which is a branch of this law of sin, is deceitful; and where there is poison in every stream, the fountain must needs be corrupt. No particular lust has any deceit in it, but what is communicated to it from this fountain of all actual lust, this law of sin. And the coming of the man of sin, is said to be in and with the "deceivableness of unrighteousness." 2 Thess. ii. 10. Unrighteousness is a thing generally decried and evil spoken of amongst men, so that it is not easy to conceive how any man should avail himself of a reputation thereby. But there is a deceivableness in it, whereby the minds of men are turned aside from a due consideration of it; as we shall manifest afterwards. And thus the account which the apostle gives, concerning those who are under the power of sin, is, that they are deceived. Tit. iii. 3. And the life of evil men is nothing but deceiving and being deceived. 2 Tim. iii. 13. So that we have sufficient testimony given, to this qualification of the enemy with whom we have to deal, he is deceitful; which consideration, of all things, puts the mind of man to a loss in dealing with an adversary. He knows he can have no security against one that is deceit-

ful, but in standing upon his own guard and defence all his days.

Further to manifest the strength and advantage that sin has by its deceit, we may observe, that the Scripture places it, for the most part, as the head and spring of every sin, even as if there were no sin followed after, but where deceit went before. So the reason the apostle gives why Adam, though he was first formed, was not first in the transgression, is, because he was not first deceived. 1 Tim. ii. 14. The woman, though made last, yet being first deceived, was first in the sin. Even that first sin began in deceit, and, until the mind was deceived, the soul was safe. Eve therefore did truly express the matter, though she did it not to a good end; "The serpent beguiled me," said she, "and I did eat." Gen. iii. 13. She thought to extenuate her own crime, by charging the serpent. And this was a new fruit of the sin she had cast herself into. But the matter of fact was true, she was beguiled before she ate; deceit went before the transgression. And the apostle shows, that sin and Satan still take the same course. 2 Cor. xi. 3. There is, says he, the same way of working towards actual sin, as was of old; beguiling, deceiving goes before, and sin, that is, the actual accomplishment of it, follows after. Hence all the great works that the devil does in the world, to stir men up to an opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom, he does them by deceit. "The devil, who deceiveth the whole world." Rev. xii. 9. It were utterly impossible men should be prevailed on to abide in his service, acting his designs to their eternal, and sometimes their temporal ruin, were they not exceedingly deceived. See Rev. xx. 10.

Hence are all those manifold cautions that are given us to take heed, that we be not deceived, if we would take heed that we do not sin. Ephes. v. 6; 1 Cor. vi. 9; xv. 33; Gal. vi. 7; Luke xxi. 8. From all which we may learn the influence that deceit has in sin, and consequently the advantage that the law of sin has to put forth its power, by its deceitfulness. Where it prevails to deceive, it fails not to bring forth its fruit.

The ground of this efficacy of sin, by deceit, is taken from the faculty of the soul, affected with it. Deceit properly affects the mind; it is the mind that is deceived. When sin attempts any other way of entrance into the soul, as by the affections, the mind, retaining its right and sovereignty, is able to give check and control to it. But where the mind is tainted, the prevalency must be great: for the mind or understanding is the leading faculty of the soul, and what that fixes on, the will and affections rush after, being capable of no consideration but what that presents to them. Hence it is that though the entanglement of the affections to sin, be oftentimes most troublesome, yet the deceit of the mind is always most dangerous; and that because of the place it possesses in the soul, as to all its operations. Its office is to guide, direct, choose, and lead; and if the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!

And this will further appear, if we consider the nature of deceit in general. It consists in presenting to the soul, or mind, things otherwise than they are, either in their nature, causes, effects, or present respect to the soul. This is the general nature of deceit, and it prevails many ways. It hides what ought to be seen and considered, conceals circumstances and consequences, presents what is

not, or things as they are not, as we shall afterwards manifest in particular. It was showed before, that Satan beguiled and deceived our first parents; that term the Holy Ghost gives to his temptation and seduction. And how he did deceive them, the Scripture relates, Gen. iii. 4, 5. He did it by representing things otherwise than they were. The fruit was desirable: that was apparent to the eye. Hence Satan takes advantage secretly to insinuate, that it was merely an abridgment of their happiness that God aimed at, in forbidding them to eat of it. That it was for a trial of their obedience, that certain, though not immediate ruin would ensue upon the eating of it, he hides from them; only he proposes the present advantage of knowledge, and so presents the whole case to them quite otherwise than indeed it was. This is the nature of deceit; it is a representation of a matter under disguises, hiding that which is undesirable, proposing that which indeed is not in it, that the mind may make a false judgment of it. So Jacob deceived Isaac, by his brother's raiment, and the skins on his hands and neck.

Again, deceit has the advantage by that way of management which is inseparable from it. It is always carried on by degrees, by little and little, that the whole of the design and aim in hand, be not at once discovered. So dealt Satan in that great deceit before mentioned; he proceeded in it by steps and degrees. First, he takes off an objection, and tells them they shall not die; then proposes the good of knowledge to them, and their being like to God thereby. To hide and conceal ends, to proceed by steps and degrees, to make use of what is obtained, and thence to press on to further effects, is the true nature of deceit. Stephen

tells the Jews, that the king of Egypt dealt subtlely, or deceitfully with their kindred. Acts vii. 19. How he did it we may see, Exod. i. He did not at first fall to killing and slaying of them, but says, verse 10, "come, let us deal wisely;" beginning to oppress them. This brings forth their bondage, verse 11. Having got this ground to make them slaves, he proceeds to destroy their children, verse 16. He fell not on them all at once, but by degrees. And this may suffice to show in general, that sin is deceitful, and the advantages that it has thereby.

For the way, and manner, and progress of sin, in working by deceit, we have it fully expressed by the apostle James; "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." James i. 14, 15. This place, declaring the whole of what we aim at in this matter, must be particularly insisted on.

In the foregoing verse, the apostle manifests that men are willing to drive the old trade which our first parents, at the entrance of sin, set up with; namely, of excusing themselves in their sins, and casting the occasion and blame of them on others. It is not, say they, from themselves, their own nature and inclinations, their own designings, that they have committed such and such evils, but merely from their temptations. And if they know not where to fix the evil of those temptations, they will lay them on God himself rather than go without an extenuation of their guilt. This evil in the hearts of men, the apostle rebuketh: "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth

he any man," verse 13. And to show the justness of this reproof, in the words mentioned, he discovers the true causes of the rise and whole progress of sin; manifesting that the whole guilt of it lies upon the sinner, and that the whole punishment of it, if not graciously prevented, will be his lot also.

We have, therefore, as was said in these words, the whole progress of lust, or indwelling sin, by the way of subtlety, fraud, and deceit, expressed and limited by the Holy Ghost. And from hence we shall manifest the particular ways and means whereby it puts forth its power and efficacy in the heart of men by deceitfulness and subtlety; and we may observe in the words,

First, the utmost end aimed at in all the actings of sin, or the tendency of it in its own nature, and that is death: "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death," the everlasting death of the sinner. Pretend what it will, this is the end it aims at, and tends to. Hiding of ends and designs, is the principal property of deceit. This sin does to the utmost; other things innumerable it pleads, but not once declares that it aims at the death, the everlasting death of the soul. And a fixed apprehension of this end of every sin, is a blessed means to prevent its prevalency in its way of deceit or beguiling.

Secondly, the general way of its acting towards that end, is by temptation; "Every man is tempted of his own lust." I purpose not to speak in general of the nature of temptations; it belongs not to our present purpose, and besides, I have done it elsewhere. It may suffice at present to observe, that the life of temptation lies in deceit. So that in the business of sin, to be effectually tempted, and to be beguiled or deceived, are the same. Thus it was

in the first temptation; it is every where called, the serpent's beguiling, or deceiving, as was manifested before: "The serpent beguiled Eve," that is, prevailed by his temptations upon her. So that every man is tempted, that is, every man is beguiled, or deceived, by his own lust, or indwelling sin, which we have often declared to be the same.

The degrees whereby sin proceeds in this work of tempting or deceiving, are five. For we showed before, that this belongs to the nature of deceit, that it works by degrees, making its advantage by one step to gain another.

The first of these consists in drawing off, or drawing away: "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust."

The second is in enticing; "And is enticed."

The third, in the conception of sin: "When lust hath conceived;" when the heart is enticed, then lust conceives in it.

The fourth is, the bringing forth of sin in its actual accomplishment; "When lust hath conceived it brings forth sin." In all which, there is a secret allusion to an adulterous deviation from conjugal duties, and illegitimate births.

The fifth is, the "finishing of sin," the completing of it, the filling up the measure of it, whereby the end originally designed by lust, is brought about: "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." As lust conceiving, naturally and necessarily brings forth sin; so sin, finished, infallibly procures eternal death.

The first of these relates to the mind; that is drawn off, or drawn away by the deceit of sin. The second to the affections; they are enticed or entan gled. The third to the will, wherein sin is con

ceived; the consent of the will being the formal conception of actual sin. The fourth to the conversation, wherein sin is brought forth; it exerts itself in the lives and courses of men. The fifth respects an obdurate course in sinning, that finishes, consummates, and shuts up the whole work of sin, whereon ensues death, or eternal ruin.

I shall principally consider the first three, wherein the main strength of the deceit of sin lies, and that, because in believers, whose state and condition is principally proposed to consideration, God is pleased, for the most part, graciously to prevent the fourth instance, or the bringing forth of actual sins in their conversations: and the last, always and wholly, or their being obdurate in a course of sin to the finishing of it. What ways God, in his grace and faithfulness, makes use of to stifle the conceptions of sin in the womb, and to hinder its actual production in the lives of men, must afterwards be spoken to. The first three instances, then, we shall insist upon fully, as those wherein the principal concernment of believers, in this matter, lies.

The first thing which sin is said to do, working in a way of deceit, is to draw away, or to draw off; whence a man is said to be drawn off, or drawn away and diverted, namely, from attending to that course of obedience and holiness, which, in opposition to sin and the law thereof, he is bound with diligence to attend to.

Now it is the mind that this effect of the deceit of sin is wrought upon. The mind or understanding, as we have shown, is the guiding, conducting faculty of the soul: it goes before in discerning, judging, and determining to make the way of moral actions fair and smooth to the will and affections.

It is to the soul what Moses told his father-in-law that he might be to the people in the wilderness, as eyes to guide them and keep them from wandering in that desolate place. It is the eye of the soul, without whose guidance the will and affections would perpetually wander in the wilderness of this world, according as any object, with an appearance of present good, did offer or present itself to them.

The first thing, therefore, that sin aims at in its deceitful working, is to draw off and divert the mind from the discharge of its duty.

There are two things which belong to the duty of the mind, in that special office which it has in and about the obedience which God requires.

First: To keep itself and the whole soul, in such a frame and posture as may render it ready to all duties of obedience, and watchful against all enticements to the conception of sin.

Secondly: In particular, carefully to attend to all particular actions, that they be performed as God requires, for matter, manner, time and season, agreeably to his will, as also for the obviating all particular tenders of sin in things forbidden. In these two things consists the whole duty of the mind of a believer. And from both of them indwelling sin endeavours to divert it, and draw it off.

The first of these is the duty of the mind in reference to the general frame and course of the whole soul; and hereof two things may be considered. First, that it is founded in a due constant consideration: 1. Of ourselves, of sin, and its vileness. 2. Of God, of his grace, and goodness. And both these sin labours to draw it off from. Secondly, in attending to those duties which are suited to

obviate the working of the law of sin, in an especial manner.

First: It endeavours to draw it off from a due consideration, apprehension, and sensibleness of its own vileness, and the danger wherewith it is attended. This, in the first place, we shall instance in. A due constant consideration of sin, in its nature, in all its aggravating circumstances, in its end and tendency, especially as represented in the blood and cross of Christ, ought always to abide with us. "Know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." Jer. ii. 19. Every sin is a forsaking the Lord our God. If the heart know not, if it consider not, that it is an evil thing and a bitter, evil in itself, bitter in its effects, fruit, and event, it will never be secured against it. Besides, that frame of heart which is most accepted with God in any sinner, is the humble, contrite, self-abasing frame: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isa. lvii. 15; see also Luke xviii. 13, 14. This becomes a sinner; no garment sits so decently about him. "Be clothed with humility," 1 Pet. v. 5, says the apostle. It is that which becomes us, and it is the only safe frame. He that walketh humbly, walketh safely. This is the design of Peter's advice, "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." 1 Peter i. 17. After that he himself had miscarried by another frame of mind, he gives this advice to all believers. It is not a bondage, servile fear, disquieting and perplexing the soul, but such a fear as may keep men constantly calling upon the Father,

with reference to the final judgment, that they may be preserved from sin, whereof they were in so great danger, which he advises them to. "If ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." This is the humble frame of soul; and how is this obtained? how is this preserved? No otherwise but by a constant deep apprehension of the evil, vileness and danger of sin. So was it wrought, so was it kept up, in the approved publican. "God be merciful," saith he, "to me a sinner." Sense of sin kept him humble, and humility made way for his access to a testimony of the pardon of sin.

And this is the great preservative, through grace, from sin, as we have an example in the instance of Joseph. Upon the urgency of his great temptation, he recoils immediately to this frame of spirit: "How," saith he, "can I do this thing, and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. A constant, steady sense of the evil of sin, gives him such preservation, that he ventures liberty and life in opposition to it. To fear sin, is to fear the Lord; so the holy man tells us that they are the same: "The fear of the Lord, that is, wisdom, and to depart from iniquity, that is understanding." Job xxviii. 28.

This, therefore, in the first place, in general, does the law of sin put forth its deceit about, namely, to draw the mind from this frame, which is the strongest fort of the soul's defence and security. It labours to divert the mind from a due apprehension of the vileness, abomination, and danger of sin. It secretly and insensibly insinuates lessening, excusing, extenuating thoughts of it; or it draws it off from pondering upon it, from being conversant about it in its thoughts, so much as it ought and formerly

has been. And if, after the heart of a man has, through the word, Spirit, and grace of Christ, been made tender, soft, deeply sensible of sin, it becomes, on any account, or by any means whatever, to have less, fewer, slighter, or less affecting thoughts of it, or about it; the mind of that man is drawn away by the deceitfulness of sin.

There are two ways amongst others, whereby the law of sin endeavours deceitfully to draw off the mind from this duty and frame ensuing thereon.

First: It does it by a horrible abuse of gospel grace. There is, in the gospel a remedy provided against the whole evil of sin, the filth, the guilt of it, with all its dangerous consequences. It is the doctrine of the deliverance of the souls of men from sin and death; a discovery of the gracious will of God towards sinners by Jesus Christ. What now is the genuine tendency of this doctrine, of this discovery of grace, and what ought we to use it and improve it to? This the apostle declares: "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Tit. ii. 11, 12. This it teaches, this we ought to learn of it, and by it. Hence universal holiness is called a "conversation that becometh the gospel." Phil. i. 27. It becomes it as that which is answerable to its end, aim, and design, as that which it requires, and which it ought to be improved to. And accordingly, it produces this effect, where the word of it is received and preserved in a saving light, Rom. xii. 2; Ephes. iv. 20—24. But herein does the deceit of sin interpose itself. It separates between the doctrine of grace, and the use and end of it. It stays upon its notions and intercepts its

influences, in its proper application. From the doctrine of the assured pardon of sin, it insinuates a regardlessness of sin. God in Christ makes the proposition, and Satan and sin make the conclusion. For that the deceitfulness of sin is apt to plead to a regardlessness of it, from the grace of God whereby it is pardoned, the apostle declares, in his reproof and detestation of such an insinuation: "What shall we say then, shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid." Rom. vi. 1. Men's deceitful hearts, saith he, are apt to make that conclusion; but far be it from us that we should give any entertainment to it. But yet that some have evidently improved that deceit to their own eternal ruin, Jude declares: "Ungodly men turning the grace of God into lasciviousness." Jude ver. 4. And we have had dreadful instances of it, in days of temptation wherein we have lived.

Indeed, in opposition to this deceit, lies much of the wisdom of faith, and power of gospel grace. When the mind is fully possessed with, and cast habitually and firmly into the mould of the notion and doctrine of gospel truth, about the full and free forgiveness of all sins in the blood of Christ, then to be able to keep the heart always in a deep humbling sense of sin, abhorrency of it, and self-abasement for it, is a great effect of gospel wisdom and grace. This is the trial and touchstone of gospel light. If it keep the heart sensible of sin, humble, lowly, and broken on that account; if it teach us to water a free pardon with tears, to detest forgiven sin, to watch diligently for the ruin of that, which we are yet assured shall never ruin us, it is divine, from above, of the Spirit of grace. If it secretly and insensibly make men loose and slight in their

thoughts about sin, it is adulterate, selfish, false. If it will be all, answer all ends, it is nothing.

Hence it comes to pass, that sometimes we see men walking in a bondage frame of spirit all their days, low in their light, mean in their apprehensions of grace, so that it is hard to discern which covenant, in their principles, they belong to; whether they are under the law, or under grace; yet walk with a more conscientious tenderness of sinning, than many who are advanced into higher degrees of light and knowledge than they. Not that the saving light of the gospel, is not the only principle of saving holiness and obedience; but that, through the deceitfulness of sin, it is variously abused, to countenance the soul in manifold neglect of duties, and to draw off the mind from a due consideration of the nature, desert, and danger of sin. And this is done several ways.

First: The soul having frequent need of relief by gospel grace against a sense of the guilt of sin, and accusation of the law, comes at length to make it a common and ordinary thing, and such as may be slightly performed. Having found a good medicine for its wounds, and such as has had experience of its efficacy, it comes to apply it slightly, and rather skins over, than cures its sores. A little less earnestness, a little less diligence, serves every time, until the soul, it may be, begins to secure itself of pardon in course. And this tends directly to draw off the mind from its constant and universal watchfulness against sin. He whose light has made his way of access plain for the obtaining of pardon, if he be not very watchful, is far more apt to become overly, formal, and careless in his work, than he who, by reason of mists and dark-

ness, beats about to find his way aright to the throne of grace. As a man that has often travelled a road, passes on without regard or inquiry; but he who is a stranger to it, observing all turnings, and inquiring of all passengers, secures his journey beyond the other.

Secondly: The deceitfulness of sin takes advantage from the doctrine of grace by many ways and means to extend the bounds of the soul's liberty, beyond what God has assigned to it. Some have never thought themselves free from a legal bondage frame until they have been brought into the confines of sensuality, and some into the depths of it. How often will sin plead "This strictness, this exactness, this solicitude, is no ways needful; relief is provided in the gospel against such things. Would you live as though there were no need of the gospel? as though pardon of sin were to no purpose?" But concerning these pleas of sin from gospel grace, we shall have occasion to speak more particularly hereafter.

Thirdly: In times of temptation this deceitfulness of sin will argue expressly for sin, from gospel grace; at least it will plead for these two things:

First: That there is no need of such a tenacious severe contending against it, as the principle of the new creature is fixed on. If it cannot divert the soul or mind wholly from attending to temptations to oppose them, yet it will endeavour to draw them off, as to the manner of their attendance. They need not use that diligence which at first the soul apprehends to be necessary.

Secondly: It will be tendering relief, as to the event of sin, that it shall not turn to the ruin or destruction of the soul, because it is, it will, or it may be pardoned by the grace of the gospel. And

this is true; this is the great and only relief of the soul against sin, the guilt whereof it has contracted already; the blessed and only remedy for a guilty soul. But when it is pleaded, and remembered by the deceitfulness of sin, in compliance with temptation to sin, then it is poison; poison is mixed in every drop of this balsam, to the danger, if not death, of the soul. And this is the first way whereby the deceitfulness of sin draws off the mind from a due attendance to that sense of its vileness, which alone is able to keep it in that humble, self-abased frame that is acceptable with God. It makes the mind careless, as though its work were needless, because of the abounding of grace; which is a soldier's neglect of his station, trusting to a reserve, provided indeed only in case of keeping his own proper place.

Secondly: Sin takes advantage to work by its deceit in this matter of drawing off the mind from a due sense of it, from the state and condition of men in the world. I shall give only one instance of its procedure in this kind. Men in their younger days, have naturally their affections more quick, vigorous, and active, more sensibly working in them than afterwards. They do, as to their sensible working and operation, naturally decay, and many things befall men, in their lives, that take off the edge and keenness of them. But as men lose in their affections, if they are not besotted in sensuality, or by the corruptions that are in the world through lust, they grow and improve in their understandings, resolutions, and judgments. Hence it is, that if what had place formerly in their affections, do not take place in their minds and judgments, they utterly lose them; they have no more place in their souls. Thus men have no regard for,

yea, they utterly despise those things which their affections were set upon with delight and greediness in their childhood. But if they are things that, by any means, come to be fixed in their minds and judgments, they continue a high esteem for them, and do cleave as close to them as they did when their affections were more vigorous; only, as it were, they have changed their seat in the soul. It is thus in things spiritual; the first and chiefest seat of the sensibleness of sin, is in the affections; as these, in natural youth, are great and large, so are they spiritually in spiritual youth; "I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals." Jer. ii. 2. Besides, such persons are newly come off from their convictions, wherein they have been cut to the heart, and so made tender. Whatever touches a wound is thoroughly felt; so does the guilt of sin, before the wound given by conviction be thoroughly cured. But now, when affections begin to decay naturally, they begin to decay also as to their sensible actions and motions in things spiritual. Although they improve in grace, yet they may decay in sense. At least, spiritual sense is not radically in them, but only by way of communication. Now in these decays, if the soul take not care to fix a deep sense of sin on the mind and judgment, thereby perpetually to affect the heart and affections, it will decay. And here the deceit of the law of sin interposes itself. It suffers a sense of sin to decay in the affections, and diverts the mind from entertaining a due, constant, fixed consideration of it. We may consider this a little, in persons that never make a progress in the ways of God beyond conviction. How sensible of sin they will be for a season! How will they then mourn and weep under a sense of the

guilt of it! How will they cordially and heartily resolve against it! Affections are vigorous, and, as it were, bear rule in their souls. But they are like an herb, that will flourish a day or two with watering, although it have no root. For, a while after, we see that these men, the more experience they have had of sin, the less they are afraid of it, as the wise man intimates, Eccles. viii. 11; and at length they come to be the greatest contemners of sin in the world. No sinner like him that has sinned away his convictions of sin. What is the reason of this? sense of sin was, in their convictions, fixed on their affections; as it decayed in them, they took no care to have it deeply and graciously fixed on their minds. This the deceitfulness of sin deprived them of, and so ruined their souls. In some measure it is so with believers. If, as the sensibleness of the affections decays, if, as they grow heavy and obtuse, great wisdom and grace be not used, to fix a due sense of sin upon the mind and judgment, which may provoke, excite, enliven and stir up the affections every day, great decays will ensue. At first, sorrow, trouble, grief, fear affected the mind, and would give it no rest. If afterwards, the mind do not affect the heart with sorrow and grief, the whole will be cast out, and the soul be in danger of being hardened. And these are some of the ways whereby the deceit of sin diverts the mind from the first part of its safe, preserving frame, or draws it off from its constant watchfulness against sin, and all the effects of it.

The second part of this general duty of the mind, is to keep the soul in a constant, holy consideration of God and his grace. This evidently lies at the spring-head of gospel obedience. The way whereby sin draws off the mind from this

part of its duty is open, and known sufficiently, though not sufficiently watched against. Now this the Scripture every where declares to be the filling of the minds of men with earthly things. This it places in direct opposition to that heavenly frame of the mind, which is the spring of gospel obedience: "Set your affections," or set your minds, "on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. iii. 2. As if he had said, On both together you cannot be set or fixed, so as principally and chiefly to mind them both. And the affections to one and the other, proceeding from these different principles of minding the one and the other, are opposed as directly inconsistent; "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John ii. 15. And actings in a course suitable to these affections, are proposed also as contrary; "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." These are two masters, whom no man can serve at the same time, to the satisfaction of both. Every inordinate minding, then, of earthly things, is opposed to that frame wherein our minds ought to be fixed on God and his grace, in a course of gospel obedience.

Several ways there are, whereby the deceitfulness of sin draws off the mind in this particular; but the chief of them is by pressing these things on the mind under the notion of things lawful, and, it may be, necessary. So all those who excuse themselves, in the parable, from coming in to the marriage feast of the gospel, did it on the account of their being engaged in their lawful callings; one about his farm, another his oxen, the means where by he ploughed in this world. By this plea, were the minds of men drawn off from that frame of

heavenliness which is required to our walking with God, and the rules of not loving the world, or using it as if we used it not, are hereby neglected. What wisdom, what watchfulness, what serious, frequent trial and examination of ourselves is required, to keep our hearts and minds in a heavenly frame, in the use and pursuit of earthly things, is not my present business to declare. This is evident, that the engine whereby the deceit of sin draws off, and turns aside the mind, in this matter, is the pretence of the lawfulness of things, about which it would have it exercise itself, against which very few are armed with sufficient diligence, wisdom, and skill. And this is the first and most general attempt that indwelling sin makes upon the soul by deceit: it draws away the mind from a diligent attention to its course, in a due sense of the evil of sin, and a due and constant consideration of God, and his grace.

CHAPTER IX.

The deceit of sin in drawing off the mind from a due attendance to the especial duties of obedience, instanced in meditation and prayer.

How sin, by its deceit, endeavours to draw off the mind from attending to that holy frame in walking with God, wherein the soul ought to be preserved, has been declared. We proceed now to show, how it does the same work, in reference to those especial duties, by which the designs, workings, and prevalency of it may, in an especial manner, be obviated and prevented. Sin, indeed, maintains an

enmity against all duties of obedience; or, rather, with God in them. "When I would do good," says the apostle, "evil is present with me." Whenever I would do good, or what good soever I would do, that is, spiritually good, good in reference to God, it is present with me, to hinder me from it, to oppose me in it. And, on the other side, all duties of obedience do lie directly against the actings of the law of sin. For as the flesh, in all its actings, lusts against the Spirit, so the Spirit, in all its actings, lusts against the flesh. And, therefore, every duty performed in the strength and grace of the Spirit, is contrary to the law of sin. "If ye by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh." Rom. viii. 13. Actings of the Spirit of grace in duties, do this work. These two are contrary. But yet there are some duties, which, in their own nature, and by God's appointment, have a peculiar influence to the weakening and subduing the whole law of sin in its very principles, and chiefest strengths; and these the mind of a believer ought principally, in his whole course, to attend to; and these does sin, in its deceit, endeavour principally to draw off the mind from. As in diseases of the body, some remedies, they say, have a specific quality, against distempers; so in this disease of the soul, there are some duties that have an especial virtue against this sinful distemper. I shall not insist on many of them, but instance only in two, which seem to me to be of this nature; namely, that by God's designation they have a special tendency towards the ruin of the law of sin. And then we shall show the ways, methods, and means, which the law of sin uses, to divert the mind from a due attendance to them. Now these duties, are, first, prayer, especially pri-

vate prayer; and, secondly, meditation. I put them together, because they much agree in their general nature and end, differing only in the manner of their performance. For, by meditation, I intend, meditating upon what respect and suitableness there is between the word and our own hearts; to this end, that they may be brought to a more exact conformity. It is our pondering on the truth as it is in Jesus, to find out the image and representation of it in our own hearts; and so it has the same intent with prayer, which is to bring our souls into a frame, in all things answering the mind and will of God. They are as the blood and spirits in the veins, that have the same life, motion, and use. But yet, because persons are generally at a great loss in this duty of meditation, having declared it to be of so great efficacy, for the controlling of the actings of the law of sin, I shall, in our passage, give briefly two or three rules for the directing of believers to a right performance of this great duty; and they are these:

First: Meditate of God with God; that is, when we would undertake thoughts and meditations of God, his excellencies, his properties, his glory, his majesty, his love, his goodness, let it be done in a way of speaking unto God, in a deep humiliation and abasement of our souls before him. This will fix the mind and draw it forth from one thing to another, to give glory to God in a due manner, and affect the soul, until it be brought into that holy admiration of God, and delight in him, which is acceptable to him. My meaning is, that it be done in a way of prayer and praise, speaking to God.

Secondly: Meditate on the word in the word: that is, in the reading of it, consider the sense in the particular passages we insist upon, looking to

God for help, guidance, and direction, in the discovery of his mind and will therein, and then labour to have your hearts affected with it.

Thirdly: What we come short of in evenness and constancy in our thoughts in these things, let it be made up in frequency. Some are discouraged, because their minds do not regularly supply them with thoughts to carry on their meditations, through the weakness or imperfection of their inventions. Let this be supplied by frequent returns of the mind to the subject proposed to be meditated upon, whereby new senses will still be supplied to it. But this by the way.

These duties, I say, amongst others (for we have only chosen them for an instance, not excluding some others from the same place, office, and usefulness with them) do make an especial opposition to the very being and life of indwelling sin, or rather faith in them doth so. They are perpetually designing its utter ruin. I shall therefore, upon this instance, in the pursuit of our present purpose, do these two things:

First: Show the suitableness and usefulness of this duty, or these duties, as I shall handle them jointly, to the ruining of sin.

Secondly: Show the means whereby the deceitfulness of sin endeavours to draw off the mind from a due attendance to them.

For the first, observe,

First: That it is the proper work of the soul, in this duty, to consider all the secret workings and actings of sin; what advantages it has got; what temptations it is in conjunction with: what harm it has already done, and what it is yet further ready to do. Hence David gives that title to one of his prayers, Psal. cii.—"A prayer of the afflicted,

when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." I speak of that prayer, which is attended with a due consideration of all the wants, straits, and emergencies of the soul. Without this, prayer is not prayer: that is, whatever show or appearance of that duty it has, it is no way useful, either to the glory of God, or the good of the souls of men. It is a cloud without water, driven by the wind of the breath of men. Nor was there ever any more present and effectual poison for souls found out, than the binding of them to a constant form and usage of I know not what words in their prayers and supplications, which themselves do not understand. Bind men so in their trades, or in their businesses in this world, and they will quickly find the effect of it. By this means, they are disabled from any due consideration of what at present is good for them, or evil to them, without which, to what use can prayer serve, but to mock God, and delude men's own souls. But in this kind of prayer which we insist on, the Spirit of God falls in to give us his assistance, and that in this very matter of finding out and discovering the most secret actings and workings of the law of sin. "We know not what to pray for as we ought, but he helps our infirmities." Rom. viii. 26. He discovers our wants to us, and wherein chiefly we stand in need of help and relief. And we find it by daily experience, that in prayer, believers are led into such discoveries and convictions of the secret deceitful work of sin in their hearts, as no considerations could ever have led them into. So David, designing the confession of his actual sin, Psal. li., having his wound, in his prayer, searched by the skilful hand of the Spirit of God, had a discovery made to him of the

root of all his miscarriages, in his original corruption, ver. 5. The Spirit, in this duty, is as the candle of the Lord to the soul, enabling it to search all the inward parts of the heart. It gives a holy spiritual light into the mind, enabling it to search the deep and dark recesses of the heart, to find out the subtle and deceitful machinations, figments, and imaginations of the law of sin therein. Whatever notion there be of it, whatever power and prevalency in it, it is laid hand on, apprehended, brought into the presence of God, judged, condemned, bewailed. And what can possibly be more effectual for its ruin and destruction? For, together with its discovery, application is made to all that relief which, in Jesus Christ, is provided against it, all ways and means whereby it may be ruined. Hence it is the duty of the mind, "to watch unto prayer." 1 Pet. iv. 7; to attend diligently to the estate of our souls, and to deal fervently and effectually with God about it. The like also may be said of meditation, wisely managed to its proper end.

Secondly: In this duty there is wrought upon the heart, a deep, full sense of the vileness of sin, with a constant, renewed, detestation of it; which, if any thing, undoubtedly tends to its ruin. This is one design of prayer, one end of the soul in it, namely, to draw forth sin, to set it in order, to present it unto itself in its vileness, abomination, and aggravating circumstances, that it may be loathed, abhorred, and cast away as a filthy thing. Isa. xxx. 22. He that pleads with God for sin's remission, pleads also with his own heart for its detestation. Hos. xiv. 3. Herein also sin is judged in the name of God; for the soul, in its confession, subscribes to God's detestation of it, and the sentence of his

law against it. There is, indeed, a course of these duties, which convinced persons do give up themselves to, a mere covert to their lusts: they cannot sin quietly, unless they perform duty constantly. But that prayer we speak of, is a thing of another nature; a thing that will allow no composition with sin, much less will serve the ends of the deceit of it, as the other formal prayer does. It will not be bribed into a secret compliance with any of the enemies of God, or the soul, no not for a moment. And hence it is, that oftentimes, in this duty, the heart is raised to the most sincere, effectual sense of sin and detestation of it, that the soul ever obtains in its whole course of obedience. And this evidently tends also to the weakening and ruin of the law of sin.

Thirdly: This is the way appointed, and blessed of God, to obtain strength and power against sin: "Doth any man lack, let him ask of God." James i. 5. Prayer is the way of obtaining from God, by Christ, a supply of all our wants, assistance against all opposition, especially that which is made against us by sin. This, I suppose, need not be insisted on; it is, in the notion and practice, clear to every believer. It is that wherein we call, and upon which the Lord Jesus comes in to our succour, with suitable help in a time of need.

Fourthly: Faith in prayer countermines all the workings of the deceit of sin; and that because the soul does therein constantly engage itself unto God to oppose all sin whatsoever. "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." Psalm cxix. 106. This is the language of every gracious soul in its addresses to God: the inmost parts thereof engage themselves to God, to cleave to him in all things, and to op-

pose sin in all things. He that cannot do this, cannot pray. To pray with any other frame, is to flatter God with our lips, which he abhors. And this exceedingly helps a believer in pursuing sin to its ruin. For,

First: If there be any secret lust that lies lurking in the heart, he will find it either rising up against this engagement, or using its artifices to secure itself from it. And hereby it is discovered: and the conviction of the heart concerning its evil, furthered and strengthened. Sin makes the most certain discovery of itself, and never more evidently, than when it is most severely pursued. Lusts in men are compared to hurtful and noisome beasts, or men themselves are so, because of their lusts. Isa. xi. 6, 7. Now such beasts use themselves to their dens and coverts, and never discover themselves, at least so much in their proper nature and rage, as when they are most earnestly pursued. And so it is with sin and corruption in the heart.

Secondly: If any sin be prevalent in the soul, it will weaken it, and take it off from the universality of this engagement unto God, it will breed a tergiversation unto it, a slightness in it. Now, when this is observed, it will exceedingly awaken a gracious soul, and stir it up to look about it. As a spontaneous lassitude, or a causeless weariness and indisposition of the body, is looked on as the sign of an approaching fever, or some dangerous distemper, which stirs up men to use a timely and vigorous prevention, that they be not seized upon by it; so is it in this case. When the soul of a believer finds in itself an indisposition to make fervent, sincere engagements of universal holiness to God, it knows that there is some prevalent distemper in it, finds the place of it, and sets itself against it.

Thirdly: Whilst the soul can thus constantly engage itself to God, it is certain that sin can rise to no ruinous prevalency. Yea, it is a conquest over sin, a most considerable conquest, when the soul does fully and clearly, without any secret reserve, come off with alacrity and resolution in such an engagement; as Psalm xvii. 23. And it may upon such a success, triumph in the grace of God, and have good hope, through faith, that it shall have a final conquest, and what it so resolves shall be done; that it has decreed a thing, and it shall be established. And this tends to the disappointment, yea, to the ruin, of the law of sin.

Fourthly: If the heart be not deceived by cursed hypocrisy, this engagement to God will greatly influence it to a peculiar diligence and watchfulness against all sin. There is no greater evidence of hypocrisy, than to have the heart say, like the adulterous woman, I have paid my vows, now I may take myself unto my sins, Prov. vii. 14; or to be negligent about sin, as being satisfied that it has prayed against it. It is otherwise in a gracious soul. Sense and consciousness of engagements against sin, made to God, makes it universally watchful against all its motions and operations. On these, and sundry others accounts, does faith in this duty exert itself peculiarly, to the weakening of the power, and stopping of the progress, of the law of sin.

If then the mind be diligent in its watch and charge, to preserve the soul from the efficacy of sin, it will carefully attend to this duty, and the due performance of it, which is of such singular advantage, to its end and purpose. Here, therefore, sin puts forth its deceit in its own defence: it labours to divert and draw off the mind from at-

tending to this and the like duties. And there are, among others, three engines, three ways and means, whereby it attempts the accomplishment of its designs.

First: It makes advantage of its weariness to the flesh. There is an aversion, as has been declared, in the law of sin, to all immediate communion with God. Now this duty is such, there is nothing accompanies it, whereby the carnal part of the soul may be gratified, or satisfied, as there may be somewhat of that nature in most public duties, in most that a man can do, beyond pure acts of faith and love. No relief, or advantage, then coming in by it, but what is purely spiritual, it becomes wearisome, burdensome to flesh and blood. It is like travelling alone, without companion or diversion, which makes the way seem long, but brings the passenger with most speed to his journey's end. So our Saviour declares, when, expecting his disciples, according to their duty and present distress, should have been engaged in this work, he found them fast asleep. "The spirit," saith he, "indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," Matt. xxvi. 41, and out of that weakness grew their indisposition to, and weariness of, their duty. So God complains of his people: "Thou hast been weary of me." Isa. xliii. 22. And it may come at length to that height which is expressed, "Ye have said, behold what a weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of Hosts,' Mal. i. 13. The Jews suppose that it was the language of men, when they brought their offerings or sacrifices on their shoulders, which they pretended wearied them, and they panted and blowed, as men ready to faint under them, when they brought only the torn, and the lame, and the

sick. But so is this duty oftentimes to the flesh. And this the deceitfulness of sin makes use of, to draw the heart by insensible degrees, from a constant attendance to it. It puts in for the relief of the weak and weary flesh. There is a compliance between spiritual flesh and natural flesh, in this matter; they help one another, and an aversion to this duty, is the effect of their compliance. So it was in the spouse, Cant. v. 2, 3. She was asleep, drowsing in her spiritual condition, and pleads her natural unfitness to rouse herself from that state. If the mind be not diligently watchful to prevent insinuations from hence, if it dwell not constantly on those considerations which evidence an attendance to this duty to be indispensable; if it stir not up the principle of grace in the heart, to retain its rule and sovereignty, and not to be dallied with by foolish pretences, it will be drawn off; which is the effect aimed at.

Secondly: The deceitfulness of sin makes use of corrupt reasonings, taken from the pressing and urging occasions of life. Should we, says it in the heart, attend strictly unto all duties in this kind, we should neglect our principal occasions, and be useless to ourselves and others in the world. And on this general account, particular businesses dispossess particular duties, from their due place and time. Men have not leisure to glorify God, and save their own souls. It is certain, that God gives us time enough for all that he requires of us, in any kind, in this world. No duties need to jostle one another, I mean constantly. Especial occasions must be determined according to especial circumstances. But if in any thing we take more upon us than we have time well to perform it in, without robbing God of that which is due to him, and our own souls, this

God calls not unto, this he blesses us not in. It is more tolerable, that our duties of holiness and regard to God, should intrench upon the duties of our callings and employments in this world, than the contrary; and yet, neither does God require this at our hands in an ordinary manner or course. How little then, will he bear with that, which evidently is so much worse, upon all accounts whatever. But yet, through the deceitfulness of sin, thus are the souls of men beguiled. By several degrees they are, at length, driven from their duty.

Thirdly: It deals with the mind, to draw it off from its attendance unto this duty, by a tender of a compensation, to be made in and by other duties. As Saul thought to compensate his disobedience by sacrifice. May not the same duty performed in public, or in the family suffice? And if the soul be so foolish as not to answer, those things ought to be done, and this not to be left undone; it may be ensnared and deceived. For besides a command unto it, namely, that we should personally watch unto prayer; there are, as has been declared, sundry advantages in this duty so performed, against the deceit and efficacy of sin, which in the most public attendance to it, it has not.—These sin strives to deprive the soul of by this commutation, which by its corrupt reasonings it tenders to it.

Fourthly: I may add here, that which has place in all the workings of sin by deceit, namely, its feeding the soul with promises and purposes of a more diligent attendance to this duty, when occasions will permit. By this means it brings the soul to say to its convictions of duty, as Felix did to Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Acts xxiv. 25. And by this means, oftentimes the present

season and time, which alone is ours, is lost irrecoverably.

These are some of the ways and means whereby the deceit of sin endeavours to draw off the mind from its due attendance to this duty, which is so peculiarly suited to prevent its progress and prevalency, and which aims so directly and immediately at its ruin. I might instance also in other duties of the like tendency. But this may suffice, to discover the nature of this part of the deceit of sin. And this is the first way whereby it makes way for the further entangling of the affections, and the conception of sin. When sin has wrought this effect on any one, he is said to be drawn away, to be diverted from what in his mind, he ought constantly to attend to, in his walking before the Lord.

And this will instruct us to see and discern where lies the beginning of our declensions and failings in the ways of God, and that, either as to our general course, or as to our attendance to especial duties. And this is of great importance and concernment to us. When the beginnings and occasions of a sickness, or distemper of body are known, it is a great advantage to direct in and unto the cure of it. God, to recall Zion to himself, shows her where was the beginning of her sin. Micah i. 13. Now this is that which, for the most part, is the beginning of sin to us, even the drawing off the mind from a due attendance, in all things, to the discharge of its duty. The principal care and charge of the soul lies on the mind; and if that fail of its duty, the whole is betrayed, either as to its general frame, or as to particular miscarriages. The failing of the mind is like the failing of the watchman in Ezekiel; the whole is lost by his neglect.

This, therefore, in that self-scrutiny and search which we are called to, we are most diligently to inquire after. God does not look at what duties we perform, as to their number and tale, or as to their nature merely, but whether we do them with that intention of mind and spirit which he requires. Many men perform duties in a road or course, and do not, as it were, so much as think of them. Their minds are filled with other things, only duty takes up so much of their time. This is but an endeavour to mock God, and deceive their own souls. Would you therefore take the true measure of yourselves, consider how it is with you, as to the duty of your minds which we have inquired after. Consider whether, by any of the deceits mentioned, you have not been diverted and drawn away; and if there be any decays upon you, in any kind, you will find that there has been the beginning of them. By one way or other, your minds have been made heedless, regardless, slothful, uncertain, being beguiled and drawn off from their duty. Consider the charge, Prov. iv. 23—27. May not such a soul say, If I had attended more diligently, if I had considered more wisely the vile nature of sin, if I had not suffered my mind to be possessed with vain hopes and foolish imaginations, by a cursed abuse of gospel grace; if I had not permitted it to be filled with the things of the world, and to become negligent in attending to special duties, I had not, at this day, been thus sick, weak, thriftless, wounded, decayed, defiled. My careless, my deceived mind, has been the beginning of sin and transgression to my soul. And this discovery will direct the soul to a suitable way for its healing and recovery, which will never be effected by a multi-

plying of particular duties, but by a restoring of the mind. Psalm xxiii. 3.

And this also hence appears to be the great means of preserving our souls, both as to their general frame and particular duties, according to the mind and will of God; namely, to endeavour after a sound and steadfast mind. It is a signal grace to have the spirit of power, and love, and of a sound mind. 2 Tim. i. 7. A stable, solid, resolved mind in the things of God, not easily moved, diverted, changed, not drawn aside; a mind not apt to hearken after corrupt reasonings, vain insinuations, or pretences to draw it off from its duty; this is that which the apostle exhorts believers to: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." 1 Cor. xv. 58. The steadfastness of our minds, abiding in their duty, is the cause of all our unmovableness, and fruitfulness in obedience. And so Peter tells us, that those who are, by any means, led away or enticed, "fall from their own steadfastness." 2 Pet. iii. 7. And the great blame that is laid upon backsliders, is, that they are not steadfast. "Their spirit was not steadfast." Psalm lxxviii. 37. For if the soul be safe, unless the mind be drawn off from its duty, the soundness and steadfastness of the mind is its great preservative. And there are three parts of this steadfastness of the mind. First, A full purpose of cleaving to God in all things. Secondly, A daily renovation and quickening of the heart, to a discharge of this purpose. Thirdly, Resolutions against all dalliances, or parleys, about negligences in that discharge, which are not here to be spoken to.

CHAPTER X.

The deceit of sin, in drawing off the mind from its attendance to particular duties, further discovered—Several things required in the mind of believers, with respect to particular duties of obedience—The actings of sin, in a way of deceit, to divert the mind from them.

We have not, as yet, brought to an issue, the first way of the working of the deceit of sin; namely, in its drawing away the mind from the discharge of its duty, which we insist upon the longer, upon a double account.

First: Because of its importance and concernment. If the mind be drawn off, if it be tainted, weakened, turned aside from a due and strict attendance to its charge and office, the whole soul, will, and affections are certainly entangled and drawn into sin; as has been in part declared, and afterwards will further appear. This we ought, therefore, to give diligent heed to, which is the design of the apostle's exhortation; "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." Heb. ii. 1. It is a failure of our minds, by the deceitfulness of sin, in losing the life, power, sense, and impression of the word; which he cautions us against. And there is no way to prevent it but by giving most earnest heed to the things which we have heard, which expresses the whole duty of our minds, in attending to obedience.

Secondly: Because the actings and workings of the mind being spiritual, are such as the conscience, unless clearly enlightened, and duly excited and stirred up, is not affected with, so as to take due

notice of them. Conscience is not apt to exercise reflex acts upon the mind's failures, as principally respecting the acts of the whole soul. When the affections are entangled with sin (of which afterwards) or the will begins to conceive it, by its express consent, conscience is apt to make an uproar in the soul, and to give it no rest or quiet, until the soul be reclaimed, or itself be, one way or other, bribed or debauched. But these neglects of the mind being spiritual, without very diligent attendance, are seldom taken notice of. Our minds are often, in the Scriptures, called our spirits: "Whom I serve in my spirit;" Rom. i. 9; and are distinguished from the soul, which principally intends the affections, in that distribution—sanctify you wholly, "your whole spirit and soul," 1 Thes. v. 23, that is, your mind and affections. It is true, where the term "spirit" is used to express spiritual gifts, it is, as to those gifts, opposed to our understandings; which is taken for the first act of the mind, in a rational perception of things, 1 Cor. xiv. 15; but as that word is applied to any faculty of our souls, it is the mind that it expresses. This then being our spirit, the actings of it are secret and hidden, and not to be discovered without spiritual wisdom and diligence. Let us not suppose then, that we have dwelt too long on this consideration, which is of so great importance to us, and yet so hidden, and which we are apt to be very insensible of; and yet our carefulness in this matter is one of the best evidences that we have of our sincerity. Let us not then be like a man that is sensible, and complains of a cut finger, but not of a decay of spirits tending to death. There remains therefore, as to this head of our discourse, the consideration of the charge of the mind, in reference to particular

duties and sins. And in the consideration of it we shall do these two things;

First: Show what is required in the mind of a believer, in reference to particular duties.

Second: Declare the way of the working of the deceit of sin, to draw it off from its attendance thereto. The like also shall be done with respect to particular sins, and their avoidance.

First: For the right performance of any duty. It is not enough that the thing required be itself performed, but that it be universally squared and fitted to the rule of it. Herein lies the great duty of the mind, namely, to attend to the rule of duties and to take care that all the concernments of them be ordered thereby. Our progress in obedience, is our edification, or building. Now it is but a very little furtherance to a building, that a man bring wood and stones, and heap them up together, without order. They must be hewed and squared, and fitted by line and rule, if we intend to build. Nor is it to any advantage to our edification in faith and obedience, that we multiply duties, if we heap them one upon another, if we order and dispose them not according to rule. And therefore does God expressly reject a multitude of duties, when not universally suited to the rule: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices?" Isa. i. 11, "they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them," ver. 14. And therefore all acceptable obedience is called, a proceeding according to rule: Gal. vi. 16; it is a canonical, or regular obedience. As letters in the alphabet heaped together signify nothing, unless they are disposed into their proper order: no more do our duties without this disposal. That they be so, is the great duty of the mind, and which, with all diligence, it is to attend to: "Walk cir-

cumspectly," Ephes. v. 15, exactly, accurately, that is, diligently in all things: take heed to the rule of what you do. We walk in duties, but we walk circumspectly in this attention of the mind.

Secondly: There are some special things which the rule directs to, that the mind is to attend in every duty; as,

First: That as to the matter of it, it be full and complete. Under the law, no beast was allowed to be a sacrifice that had any member wanting, any defect of parts. Such were rejected as well as those that were lame or blind. Duties must be complete as to the parts, the matter of them. There may be such a part of the price kept back, as may make the tendering of all the residue unacceptable. Saul, sparing Agag and the fattest of the cattle, rendered the destroying of all the rest useless. Thus, when men will give alms, or perform other services, but not to the proportion that the rule requires, and which the mind by diligent attention to it, might discover, the whole duty is vitiated.

Secondly: As to the principle of it, namely, that it be done in faith, and therein by an actual derivation of strength from Christ, without whom we "can do nothing," John xv. 5. It is not enough that the person be a believer, though that be necessary to every good work, Ephes. ii. 10, but also that faith be peculiarly active in every duty that we do; for our whole obedience is "the obedience of faith;" Rom. i. 5, that is, which the doctrine of faith requires, and which the grace of faith bears or brings forth. So Christ is expressly said to "be our life;" Col. iii. 4, our spiritual life, that is, the spring, author, and cause of it. Now as in life natural, no vital act can be performed, but by the actual operation of the principle of life itself; so, in life spiritual,

no spiritually vital act, that is, no duty acceptable to God, can be performed, but by the actual working of Christ, who is our life. And this is no other way derived to us, but by faith. Whence saith the apostle, "Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God." Gal. ii. 20. Not only was Christ his life, a living principle to him, but he led a life, that is, discharged vital actions, in all duties of holiness and obedience, by the faith of the Son of God, or in him; deriving supplies of grace and strength from him thereby. This therefore ought a believer diligently to attend to, namely, that every thing he does to God, be done in the strength of Christ; which wherein it consists, ought diligently to be inquired into, by all who intend to walk with God.

Thirdly: In this respect to rule, the manner of the performance of every duty is to be regarded. Now there are two things in the manner of the performance of any duty, which a believer, who is intrusted with spiritual light, ought to attend to.

First: That it be done in the way, and by the means, that God has prescribed, with respect to the outward manner of its performance. And this is especially to be regarded in duties of the worship of God; the matter and outward manner whereof do both equally fall under his command. If this be not regarded, the whole duty is vitiated. I speak not of them who suffer themselves to be deluded by the deceitfulness of sin, utterly to disregard the rule of the word in such things, and to worship God according to their own imagination, but of them principally, who, although they in general profess to do nothing but what God requires, and as he requires it, yet do not diligently attend to the rule, to make the authority of God to

be the sole cause and reason, both of what they do, and of the manner of the performance of it. And this is the reason that God so often calls on his people to consider diligently and wisely, that they may do all according as he had commanded.

Secondly: The affections of the heart and mind in duties, belong to the performance of them in the inward manner. The prescriptions and commands of God, for attendance hereunto, are innumerable, and the want hereof, renders every duty an abomination unto him. A sacrifice without a heart, without salt, without fire, of what value is it? No more are duties without spiritual affections. And herein is the mind to keep the charge of God; to see that the heart which he requires, be tendered to him. And we find also, that God requires especial affections to accompany special duties—"he that gives with cheerfulness;" which if they are not attended to, the whole is lost.

Thirdly: The mind is to attend to the ends of duties, and therein, principally, the glory of God in Christ. Several other ends will sin and self impose upon our duties; especially two it will press hard upon us with: First, Satisfaction of our convictions and consciences. Secondly, The praise of men. For self-righteousness and ostentation are the main ends of men that are fallen off from God in all moral duties whatsoever. In their sins they endeavour to satisfy their lusts; in their duties, their conviction and pride. These the mind of a believer is diligently to watch against, and to keep up in all a single eye to the glory of God, as that which answers the great and general rule of all our obedience; "Whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." These and the like things, I say, which are commonly spoken to, is the mind of a

believer obliged to attend diligently and constantly to, with respect to all the particular duties of our walking before God. Here then lies no small part of the deceit of sin; namely, to draw the mind off from this watch, to bring an inadvertency upon it, that it shall not, in these things, keep the watch and charge of the Lord. And if it can do so, and thereby strip our duties of all their excellencies, which lie in these concernments of them, that the mind is to attend to, it will not much trouble itself, nor us, about the duties themselves. And this it attempts several ways.

First: By persuading the mind to content itself with generals, and to take it off from attending to things in particular instances. For example: It would persuade the soul to rest satisfied in a general aim of doing things to the glory of God, without considering how every particular duty may have that tendency. Thus Saul thought that he had fulfilled his whole duty, and done the will of God, and sought his glory, in his war against Amalek, when, for want of attendance to every particular duty in that service, he had dishonoured God, and ruined himself and his posterity. And men may persuade themselves, that they have a general design for the glory of God, when they have no active principle in particular duties tending at all that way. But if, instead of fixing the mind by faith on the peculiar advancing the glory of God in a duty, the soul contents itself with a general notion of doing so, the mind is already diverted and drawn off from its charge, by the deceitfulness of sin. If a man be travelling on a journey, it is not only required of him, that he bend his course that way, and so go on; but, if he attend not to every turning, and other occurrences in his way, he may wander,

and never come to his journey's end. And if we suppose that, in general, we aim at the glory of God, as we all profess to do, yet if we attend not to it distinctly, upon every duty that occurs in our way, we shall never attain the end aimed at. And he who satisfies himself with this general purpose, without acting it in every special duty, will not long retain that purpose. It does the same work upon the mind, in reference to the principle of our duties, as it does to the end. Their principle is, that they be done in faith, in the strength of Christ; but if men content themselves that they are believers, that they have faith, and do not labour in every particular duty to act faith, to lead their spiritual lives, in all the acts of them, "by the faith of the Son of God," the mind is drawn off from its duty. It is particular actions wherein we express and exercise our faith and obedience; and what we are in them, that we are, and no more.

Secondly: It draws off the mind from the duties before mentioned, by insinuating a secret contentment to it, from the duty itself performed, as to the matter of it.

This is a fair discharge of a natural conscience. If the duty be performed, though as to the manner of its performance it come short, almost in all things, of the rule, conscience and conviction will be satisfied. As Saul, upon his expedition against Amalek, cries to Samuel, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, I have done the commandment of the Lord." He satisfied himself, though he had not attended, as he ought, to the whole will of God in that matter. And thus was it with those in Isa. lviii. 3. 'Wherefore have we fasted," say they, "and thou regardest it not? They had pleased themselves in the performance of their duties, and ex-

pected that God also should be pleased with them. But he shows them at large wherein they had failed, and that so far as to render what they had done an abomination. And the like charge he expresses against them, chap. xlviii. 1, 2. This the deceitfulness of sin endeavours to draw the mind to, namely, to take up in the performance of the duty itself. "Pray thou oughtest, and thou hast prayed; give alms thou oughtest, and thou hast given alms; quiet then thyself in what thou hast done, and go on to do the like." If it prevail herein, the mind is discharged from further attendance and watching to duty, which leaves the soul on the borders of many evils. For,

Thirdly: Hence customariness in all duties will quickly ensue, which is the height of sin's drawing off the mind from duty. For men's minds may be drawn from all duties in the midst of the most abundant performance of them. For in and under them, the mind may be subject to an habitual diversion from its charge and watch to the rule. What is done with such a frame, is not done to God. Amos v. 25. None of their sacrifices were to God, although they professed they were all so. But they attended not to his worship in faith, and to his glory, and he despised all their duties. Hos. x. 1. And this is the great reason why professors thrive so little under the performance of a multitude of duties. They attend not to them in a due manner, their minds being drawn off from their circumspect watch, and so they have little or no communion with God in them, which is the end whereto they are designed, and by which alone they become useful and profitable to themselves. And in this manner are many duties of worship and obedience performed by a woful generation of

hypocrites, formalists, and profane persons, without either life or light in themselves, or acceptation with God; their minds being wholly estranged from a due attendance to what they do, by the power and deceitfulness of sin.

Fourthly: As it is in respect of duties, so also it is in respect of sins. There are sundry things in and about every sin that the mind of a believer, by virtue of its office and duty, is obliged to attend diligently to, for the preservation of the soul from it. Things they are which God has appointed and sanctified, to give effectual rebukes and checks to the whole working of the law of sin, and such as in the law of grace, under which we are, are exceedingly suited and fitted to that purpose. And these the deceit of sin endeavours, by all means to draw off the mind from a due consideration of, and attendance to. Some few of them we shall a little reflect upon.

First: The first and most general is, the sovereignty of God, the great lawgiver, by whom it is forbidden. This Joseph fixed on in his great temptation: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? Gen. xxxix. 9. There was in it a great evil, a great ingratitude against man, which he pleads also, and insists upon, ver. 8, 9, but that which fixed his heart and resolution against it, was the formality of it, that it was sin against God, by whom it was severely forbidden. So the apostle informs us, that in our dealing in any thing that is against the law, our respect is still to be to the lawgiver, and his sovereignty: "If thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge; there is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy." James iv. 11, 12. Consider this always, there is one lawgiver, holy,

righteous, armed with sovereign power and authority; he is able to save and destroy. Hence sin is called a rebellion, a casting off his yoke, a despising of him, and that in his sovereignty, as the great lawgiver, and this ought the mind always practically to attend to, in all the lustings, actings, and suggestions of the law of sin, especially when advantaged by any suitable or vigorous temptation. It is God that has forbidden this thing, the great lawgiver, under whose absolute sovereignty I am, in dependence on whom I live, and by whom I am to be disposed of, as to my present and eternal condition. This Eve fixed on, at the beginning of her temptation; God has said, we must not eat of this tree, Gen. iii. 3; but she kept not her ground, she abode not by that consideration, but suffered her mind to be diverted from it by the subtlety of Satan, which was the entrance of her transgression; and so it is to us, in all our deviations from obedience.

Secondly: The deceit of sin, of every sin, the punishment appointed to it in the law, is another thing that the mind ought actually to attend to, in reference to every particular evil. And the diversions from this that the minds of men have been doctrinally and practically attended with, have been an inlet into all manner of abominations. Job professes another frame in himself; "Destruction from God was a terror unto me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure." Job xxxi. 23. Many evils he had mentioned in the foregoing verses, and pleads his innocency from them, although they were such as, upon account of his greatness and power, he could have committed easily, without fear of danger from men. Here he gives the reason that prevailed with him, so care-

fully to abstain from them, "Destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure." I considered, says he, that God had appointed death and destruction for the punishment of sin, and that such was his greatness, highness, and power, that he could inflict it to the uttermost, in such a way, as no creature is able to abide or avoid. So the apostle directs believers, always to consider what a "fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. x. 31, and that because he has said, "vengeance is mine, I will recompense," ver. 30. He is a sin-avenging God, that will by no means acquit the guilty; as in the declaration of his gracious name, infinitely full of encouragement to poor sinners in Christ, he adds in the close, that he "will by no means clear the guilty." Exod. xxxiv. 7. That he may keep upon the minds of them whom he pardons, a due sense of the punishment that is due from his vindictive justice, to every sin. And so the apostle would have us mind, that even our "God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29; that is, that we should consider his holiness and vindictive justice, appointing to sin a meet recompense of reward. And men's breaking through this consideration, he reckons as the height of the aggravation of their sins: "They knew that it is the judgment of God, that they which commit such things, were worthy of death, yet continued to do them." Rom. i. 32. What hope is there for such persons? There is, indeed, relief against this consideration, for humbled believing souls in the blood of Christ; but this relief is not to take off the mind from it, as it is appointed of God to be a restraint from sin. And both these considerations, even the sovereignty of God, and the punishment of sin, are put to-

gether by our Saviour: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matt. x. 28.

Thirdly: The consideration of all the love and kindness of God, against whom every sin is committed, is another thing that the mind ought diligently to attend to. And this is a prevailing consideration, if rightly and graciously managed in the soul. This Moses presses on the people: "Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and established thee?" Deut. xxxii. 6. Is this a requital for eternal love, and all the fruits of it? for the love and care of a Father, of a Redeemer, that we have been made partakers of? And it is the same consideration which the apostle manages to this purpose: "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. vii. 1. The receiving of the promises ought to be effectual, as to stir us up to all holiness, so to work and effect an abstinence from all sin. And what promises are these? namely, that God will be "a Father unto us, and will receive us," 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18, which comprises the whole of all the love of God towards us, here and to eternity. If there be any spiritual ingenuity in the soul, whilst the mind is attentive to this consideration, there can be no prevailing attempt made upon it by the power of sin. Now there are two parts of this consideration.

First: That which is general in it; that which is common to all believers. This is managed to this purpose: "Behold, what manner of love the

Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 John iii. 1—3. Consider, says he, the love of God, and the privileges that we enjoy by it: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." Adoption is an especial fruit of it, and how great a privilege is this? Such love it is, and such are the fruits of it, that the world knows nothing of the blessed condition which we obtain and enjoy thereby: "The world knoweth us not." Nay, it is such love, and so unspeakably blessed and glorious are the effects of it, that we ourselves are not able to comprehend them. What use, then, ought we to make of this contemplation of the excellent, unspeakable love of God? Why, says he, "every one that hath this hope, purifieth himself." Every man, who being made partaker of this love, and thereupon a hope of the full enjoyment of the fruits of it, of being made like to God in glory, purifieth himself, that is, in an abstinence from all and every sin, as in the following words is at large declared.

Secondly: It is to be considered as to such peculiar mercies and fruits of love, as every one's soul has been made partaker of. There is no believer, but, besides the love and mercy which he has in common with all his brethren, he has also, in the lot of his inheritance, some inclosures, some especial mercies wherein he has a single property. He has some joy which no stranger intermeddles with,

Prov. xiv. 10, particular applications of covenant love and mercy to his soul. Now these are all provisions laid in by God, that they may be borne in mind against an hour of temptation, that the consideration of them may preserve the soul from the attempts of sin. Their neglect is a high aggravation of our provocations. It is charged as the great evil of Solomon, that he had sinned against special mercies, especial intimations of love; he sinned after God "had appeared to him twice." 1 Kings xi. 9. God required that he should have borne in mind that especial favour, and have made it an argument against sin: but he neglected it, and is burdened with this sore rebuke. And, indeed, all especial mercies, all especial tokens and pledges of love, are utterly lost and misspent upon us, if they are not improved to this end. This, then, is another thing, that it is the duty of the mind greatly to attend to and to oppose effectually, to every attempt that is made on the soul, by the law of sin.

Thirdly: The considerations that arise from the blood and mediation of Christ, are of the same importance. So the apostle declares, "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. There is a constraining efficacy in this consideration; it is great, forcible, effectual, if duly attended to. But I must not here in particular insist on these things. Nor,

Fourthly: Shall I speak of the inhabitation of the Spirit, the greatest privilege that we are made partakers of in this world, The due consideration how he is grieved by sin, how his dwelling-place

is defiled thereby, how his comforts are forfeited, lost, despised by it, might also be insisted on. But the instances passed through are sufficient for our purpose. Now herein lies the duty of the mind, in reference to particular sins and temptations. It is diligently and carefully to attend to these things, to dwell constantly upon the consideration of them, to have them in a continual readiness to oppose to all the lustings, actings, warrings, attempts and rage of sin.

In reference hereto does sin, in an especial manner, put forth and act its deceit. It labours by all means to draw off the mind from its due attendance to these things, to deprive the soul of this great preservative and antidote against its poison. It endeavours to cause the soul to satisfy itself with general undigested notions about sin, that it may have nothing in particular to betake itself to in its own defence, against its attempts and temptations. And the ways whereby it does this, may be also briefly considered.

First: It is from the deceit of sin that the mind is spiritually slothful, whereby it becomes negligent to this duty. The principal discharge of its trust, in this matter, is expressed by watching, which is the great caution that the Lord Jesus gave to his disciples, in reference to all their dangers from sin and Satan, "I say unto all, Watch," Mark xiii. 37. That is, use your utmost diligence and circumspection that you be not surprised and entangled with temptations. It is called also consideration; "Consider your ways;" "Consider your latter end;" the want whereof God complains of in his people, Deut. xxxii. 29. Now that which is contrary to these indispensable conditions of our preservation, is spiritual slothfulness, as the apostle declares,

"And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end, that you be not slothful." Heb. vi. 11, 12. If we show not diligence we are slothful, and in danger of coming short to inherit the promises; see what Peter says: "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge, &c. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful, in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins; wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things you shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Pet. i. 5, 9, 10. All this the mind is turned from, if once by the deceit of sin it be made slothful. Now this sloth consists in three things.

First: Inadvertency; it does not set itself to consider and attend to its special concernments. The apostle, persuading the Hebrews with all earnestness to attend diligently, to consider carefully, that they may not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, gives this reason of their danger, that they were "dull of hearing." Heb. v. 11. That is, that they were slothful, and did not attend to the things of their duty. A secret regardlessness is apt to creep upon the soul, and it does not set itself to a diligent marking how things go with it, and what is continually incumbent on it.

Secondly: An unwillingness to be stirred up to its duty. "The slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his

mouth again." Prov. xix. 24. There is an unwillingness in sloth to take any notice of warnings, calls, excitations, or stirrings up by the word, spirit, judgments, any thing that God makes use of, to call the mind to a due consideration of the condition of the soul. And this is a perfect evidence that the mind is made slothful by the deceit of sin, when especial calls and warnings, whether in a suitable word, or a pressing judgment, cannot prevail with it to pull its hand out of its bosom; that is, to set about the special duties that it is called to.

Thirdly: Weak and ineffectual attempts to recover itself to its duty. "As the door turneth itself upon its hinges, so doth the slothful man upon his bed." Prov. xxvi. 14. In the turning of a door upon its hinges, there is some motion, but no progress. It removes up and down, is still in the place and posture that it was. So is it with the spiritually slothful man on his bed, or in his security. He makes some motions or faint endeavours towards a discharge of his duty, but goes not on. There where he was one day, there he is the next; yea, there where he was one year, he is the next. His endeavours are faint, cold, and evanescent; he gets no ground by them, but is always beginning, and never finishing his work.

First: Heartlessness upon the apprehensions of difficulties and discouragements. "The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way, I shall be slain in the streets." Prov. xxii. 13. Every difficulty deters him from duty. He thinks it impossible for him to attain to that accuracy, exactness, and perfection which he is, in this matter, to press after; and therefore contents himself in his old coldness and negligence, rather than to run the hazard

of a universal circumspection. Now if the deceit of sin has once drawn away the mind into this frame, it lays it open to every temptation and incursion of sin. The spouse in the Canticles seems to have been overtaken with this distemper; Cant. v. 1—3, and this puts her on various excuses, why she cannot attend to the call of Christ, and apply herself to her duty in walking with him.

Secondly: It draws away the mind from its watch and duty, in reference to sin, by surprisals. It falls into conjunction with some urgent temptation, and surprises the mind into thoughts quite of another nature than those which it ought to insist upon, in its own defence. So it seems to have been with Peter; his carnal fear, closing with the temptation wherein Satan sought to winnow him, filled his mind with so many thoughts about his own imminent danger, that he could not take into consideration the love and warning of Christ, nor the evil whereunto his temptation led him, nor any thing that he ought to have insisted on for his preservation. And, therefore, upon a review of his folly, in neglecting those thoughts of God, and the love of Christ, which, through the assistance of the Holy Ghost, might have kept him from his scandalous fall, "he wept bitterly." And this, indeed, is the common way of the working of the deceit of sin, as to particular evils. It lays hold on the mind suddenly, with thoughtfulness about the present sin, possesses it, takes it up, so that, either it recovers not itself at all to the considerations mentioned, or, if any thoughts of them be suggested, the mind is so prepossessed and filled, that they make no impression on the soul, or make no abode in it. Thus, doubtless, was David surprised in the entrance of his great sin. Sin and temptation did so

possess and fill his mind with the present object of his lust, that he utterly forgot, as it were, those considerations which he had formerly made use of when he so diligently kept himself from his iniquity. Here, therefore, lies the great wisdom of the soul, in rejecting the very first motions of sin; because, by parleys with them, the mind may be drawn off from attending to its preservatives, and so the whole rush into evil.

Thirdly: It draws away the mind by frequency and long continuance of its solicitations, making as it were at last a conquest of it. And this happens not without an open neglect of the soul, in want of stirring up itself to give an effectual rebuke, in the strength and by the grace, of Christ, to sin, which would have prevented its prevalency. But of this, more shall be spoken afterwards. And this is the first way whereby the law of sin acts its deceit against the soul. It draws off the mind from attendance to its charge and office, both in respect of duty and sin. And so far as this is done, the person is said to be drawn away, or drawn off. He is tempted; every man is tempted when he is thus drawn away by his own lust, or the deceit of sin, dwelling in him. And the whole effect of this working of the deceitfulness of sin, may be reduced to three heads.

First: The remission of a universally watchful frame of spirit unto every duty, and against all, even the most hidden and secret actings of sin.

Secondly: The omission of peculiar attending to such duties as have an especial respect to the weakening and ruin of the whole law of sin, and the obviating of its deceitfulness.

Thirdly: Spiritual sloth, as to a diligent regard to all the special concernments of duties and sins.

When these three things, with their branches mentioned, less or more, are brought about, in, or upon the soul, or so far as they are so, so far a man is drawn off by his own lust, or the deceit of sin.

There is no need of adding here any directions for the prevention of this evil, they having sufficiently been laid down, in our passage through the consideration, both of the duty of the mind, and of the deceit of sin.

CHAPTER XI.

The working of sin by deceit to entangle the affections—The ways whereby it is done—Means of their prevention.

The second thing in the words of the apostle, ascribed to the deceitful working of sin, is its enticing. A man is drawn away and enticed. And this seems particularly to respect the affections, as drawing away doth the mind. The mind is drawn away from duty, and the affections are enticed to sin. From the prevalency hereof, a man is said to be enticed, or entangled, as with a bait; so the word imports. For there is an allusion in it to the bait wherewith a fish is taken on the hook, which holds him to his destruction. And concerning this effect of the deceit of sin, we shall briefly show two things.

First: What it is to be enticed, or to be entangled, with the bait of sin: to have the affections tainted with an inclination thereto, and when they are so.

Secondly: What course sin takes, and what way

it proceeds in, thus to entice, ensnare, or entangle the soul.

Our first inquiry is, what it is to be enticed, or entangled, with the bait of sin: and here,

First: The affections are certainly entangled when they stir up frequent imaginations about the proposed object, which this deceit of sin leads and entices towards.

When sin prevails, and the affections are gone fully after it, it fills the imagination with it, possessing it with images, likenesses, appearances of it continually. Such persons devise iniquity, and work evil on their beds; which they also practise, when they are able, when it is "in the power of their hand." Mic. ii. 1. As in particular, Peter tells us, that they "have eyes full of an adulteress, and they cannot cease from sin." 2 Pet. ii. 14. That is, their imaginations are possessed with a continual representation of the object of their lusts. And it is so, in part, where the affections are, in part, entangled with sin, and begin to turn aside to it. John tells us, that the things that are in the world are "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." 1 John ii. 16. The lust of the eyes is that which, by them, is conveyed into the soul. Now it is not the bodily sense of seeing, but the fixing of the imagination, from that sense, on such thing that is intended. And this is called the eyes, because thereby things are constantly represented to the mind and soul, as outward objects are to the inward sense, by the eyes. And oftentimes, the outward sight of the eyes is the occasion of these imaginations. So Achan declares how sin prevailed with him; first he saw the wedge of gold and Babylonish garment, and then he coveted them. Josh. vii. 21. He

rolled them, the pleasures, the profit of them, in his imagination, and then fixed his heart upon the obtaining of them. Now the heart may have a settled, fixed detestation of sin; but yet, if a man find that the imagination of the mind is frequently solicited by it, and exercised about it, such a one may know, that his affections are secretly enticed and entanged.

Secondly: This entanglement is heightened, when the imagination can prevail with the mind to lodge vain thoughts in it with secret delight and complacency. This is termed by casuists, *Cogitatio morosa cum delectatione*, an abiding thought with delight, which, towards forbidden objects, is in all cases actually sinful. And yet, this may be, when the consent of the will to sin is not obtained; when the soul would not, for the world, do the thing which yet thoughts begin to lodge in the mind about. This lodging of vain thoughts in the heart the prophet complains of, as a thing greatly sinful, and to be abhorred. Jer. iv. 14. All these thoughts are messengers, that carry sin to and fro, between the imagination and the affections, and still increase it, inflaming the imagination, and more and more entangling the affections. Achan thinks upon the golden wedge, this makes him like it, and love it; by loving it, his thoughts are infected, and return to the imagination of its worth, and goodly show, and so, by little and little, the soul is inflamed to sin. And here if the will parts with its sovereignty, sin is actually conceived.

Thirdly: Inclinations, or readiness to attend to extenuations of sin, or the reliefs that are tendered against sin, when committed, manifest the affections to be entangled with it. We have shown, and shall yet further evidence, that it is a great part of the deceit of sin, to tender lessening and extenu-

ating thoughts of sin to the mind. Is it not a little one? or, there is mercy provided; or, it shall be, in due time, relinquished and given over; is its language in a deceived heart. Now, when there is a readiness in the soul to hearken and give entertainment to such secret insinuations, arising from this deceit, in reference to any sin, or unapproved course, it is an evidence that the affections are enticed. When the soul is willing, as it were to be tempted, to be courted by sin, to hearken to its dalliances and solicitations, it has lost of its conjugal affections to Christ, and is entangled. This is "looking on the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright," Prov. xxiii. 31: a pleasing contemplation on the invitations of sin, whose end the wise man gives us, verse 32. When the deceit of sin has prevailed thus far on any person, then he is enticed or entangled; the will is not yet come to the actual conception of this or that sin by its consent, but the whole soul is in a near inclination thereunto. And many other instances I could give as tokens and evidences of this entanglement. These may suffice to manifest what we intend thereby.

Our next inquiry is, how, or by what means, the deceit of sin proceeds, thus to entice and entangle the affections; and two or three of its baits are manifest herein.

First: It makes use of its former prevalency upon the mind in drawing it off from its watch and circumspection. Says the wise man, "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird;" Prov. i. 17; or, before the eyes of every thing that has a wing, as in the original. If it has eyes open to discern the snare, and a wing to carry it away, it will not be caught. And in vain would the de-

ceit of sin spread its snares and nets for the entanglement of the soul, whilst the eyes of the mind are intent upon what it does, and so stir up the wings of its will and affections, to carry it away and avoid it. But if the eyes be put out, or diverted, the wings are of very little use for escape. And therefore this is one of the ways which is used by them who take birds or fowls in their nets; they have false lights, or shows of things, to divert the sight of their prey; and when that is done, they take the season to cast their nets upon them. So does the deceit of sin; it first draws off and diverts the mind, by false reasonings and pretences, as has been shown, and then casts its net upon the affections for their entanglement.

Secondly: Taking advantage of such seasons, it proposes sin as desirable, as exceedingly satisfactory, to the corrupt part of our affections. It gilds over the object by a thousand pretences, which it presents to corrupt lustings. This is the laying of a bait, which the apostle, in this verse, evidently alludes to. A bait is somewhat desirable and suitable, that is proposed to the hungry creature for its satisfaction, and it is, by all artifices, rendered desirable and suitable. Thus is sin presented, by the help of the imagination, to the soul, that is, sinful and inordinate objects which the affections cleave to, are so presented. The apostle tells us, that there are "pleasures of sin;" Heb. xi. 25: which, unless they are despised, as they were by Moses, there is no escaping of sin itself. Hence they that live in sin, are said to "live in pleasure," James v. 5. Now this pleasure of sin consists in its suitableness to give satisfaction to the flesh, to lust, to corrupt affections. Hence is that caution, "Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lust

thereof." Rom. xiii. 14. That is, do not suffer your minds, thoughts, or affections to fix upon sinful objects, suited to give satisfaction to the lusts of the flesh, to nourish and cherish them thereby. To which purpose he speaks again, "Fulfil ye not the lusts of the flesh." Gal. v. 16. Bring not in the pleasures of sin, to give them satisfaction. When men are under the power of sin, they are said to "fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Ephes. ii. 3. Thus, therefore, the deceit of sin endeavours to entangle the affections, by proposing to them, through the assistance of the imagination, that suitableness which is in it, to the satisfaction of its corrupt lusts, now set at some liberty, by the inadvertency of the mind. It presents its wine sparkling in the cup, the beauty of the adulteress, the riches of the world, to sensual and covetous persons, and somewhat in the like kind, in some degree, to believers themselves. When, therefore, I say, sin would entangle the soul, it prevails with the imagination to solicit the heart, by representing this false painted beauty, or pretended satisfactoriness of sin: and then if Satan, with any peculiar temptation, fall into its assistance, it oftentimes inflames all the affections, and puts the whole soul into disorder.

Thirdly: It hides the danger that attends sin, it covers it, as the hook is covered with the bait, or the net spread over with meat for the fowl to be taken. It is not, indeed, possible that sin should utterly deprive the soul of the knowledge of the danger of it. It cannot dispossess it of its notion or persuasion that "the wages of sin is death;" and that it is the judgment of God, that they that commit sin are "worthy of death." But this it will do, it will so take up and possess the mind

and affections, with the baits and desirableness of sin, that it shall divert them from an actual and practical contemplation of the danger of it. What Satan did, in and by his first temptation, that sin does ever since. At first, Eve guards herself with calling to mind the danger of sin; If we eat or touch it, we shall die. Gen. iii. 3. But, so soon as Satan had filled her mind with the beauty and usefulness of the fruit, to make one wise, how quickly did she lay aside her practical prevalent consideration of the danger of eating it, the curse due to it; or else relieves herself with a vain hope and pretence that it should not be, because the serpent told her so. So was David beguiled in his great transgression, by the deceit of sin; his lust being pleased and satisfied, the consideration of the guilt and danger of his transgression was taken away: and therefore he is said to have "despised the Lord," 2 Sam. xii. 9, in that he considered not the evil that was in his heart, and the danger that attended it in the threatening or commination of the law. Now sin, when it presses upon the soul to this purpose, will use a thousand wiles to hide from it the terror of the Lord, the end of transgressions; and especially of that peculiar folly which it solicits the mind to. Hopes of pardon shall be used to hide it, and future repentance shall hide it, and present importunity of lust shall hide it, occasions and opportunities shall hide it, surprisals shall hide it, extenuation of sin shall hide it, balancing of duties against it shall hide it, fixing the imagination on present objects shall hide it, desperate resolutions to venture the uttermost for the enjoyment of lust, in its pleasures and profits, shall hide it. A thousand wiles it has which cannot be recounted.

Fourthly: Having prevailed thus far, gilding

over the pleasures of sin, hiding its end and demerit, it proceeds to raise perverse reasonings in the mind, to fix it upon the sin proposed, that it may be conceived and brought forth, the affections being already prevailed upon; of which we shall speak under the next head, of its progress.

Here we may stay a little, as formerly, to give some few directions for the obviating of this woful work of the deceitfulness of sin. Would we not be enticed or entangled, would we not be disposed to the conception of sin, would we be turned out of the road and way which goes down to death? Let us take heed of our affections, which are of so great concernment in the whole course of our obedience, that they are commonly, in the Scripture, called by the name of the heart, as the principal thing which God requires, in our walking before him. And this is not slightly to be attended to. The wise man says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," Prov. iv. 23; or, as in the original, above or before all keepings; before every watch, keep thy heart. You have many keepings that you watch to; you watch to keep your lives, to keep your estates, to keep your reputations, to keep up your families; but, says he, above all these keepings, prefer that, attend to that of the heart, of your affections, that they be not entangled with sin; there is no safety without it. Save all other things and lose the heart, and all is lost, lost to all eternity. You will say then, What shall we do, or how shall we observe this duty?

First: Keep your affections, as to their object in general. This advice the apostle gives in this very case, Coloss. iii. His advice, in the beginning of that chapter, is to direct us to the mortification of sin, which he expressly engages in, ver. 5:

"Mortify therefore your members which are on the earth." Prevent the working and deceit of sin. which wars in your members. To prepare us, to enable us hereto, he gives us that great direction, ver. 2: "Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth." Fix your affections upon heavenly things: this will enable you to mortify sin: fill them with the things that are above, let them be exercised with them, and so enjoy the chiefest place in them. They are above: blessed and suitable objects, meet for, and answering to, our affections; God himself, in his beauty and glory; the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "altogether lovely, the chiefest of ten thousand;" grace and glory; the mysteries revealed in the gospel, the blessedness promised thereby. Were our affections filled, taken up, and possessed with these things, as it is our duty that they should be, it is our happiness when they are; what access could sin, with its painted pleasures, with its sugared poisons with its envenomed baits, have to our souls? How should we loathe all its proposals, and say to them, Get ye hence, as an abominable thing? For, what are the vain, transitory pleasures of sin in comparison of the exceeding recompense of reward which is proposed to us? which argument the apostle presses, 2 Cor. iv. 18.

Secondly: As to the object of your affections in an especial manner, let it be the cross of Christ, which has an exceeding efficacy towards the disappointment of the whole work of indwelling sin. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Gal. vi. 14. The cross of Christ the apostle gloried and rejoiced in: this his heart was set upon, and these

were the effects of it; it crucified the world to him made it a dead and undesirable thing. The baits and pleasures of sin are taken, all of them out of the world, and the things that are in the world, namely, the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." These are the things that are in the world; from these sin takes all its baits, whereby it entices and entangles our souls. If the heart be filled with the cross of Christ, it casts death and undesirableness upon them all; it leaves no seeming beauty, no appearing pleasure or comeliness in them. Again, says he, "It crucifies me to the world; makes my heart, my affections, my desires, dead unto any of these things." It roots up corrupt lusts and affections, leaves no principle to go forth and make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. Labour, therefore, to fill your hearts with the cross of Christ. Consider the sorrows he underwent, the curse he bore, the blood he shed, the cries he put forth, the love that was in all this to your souls, and the mystery of the grace of God therein. Meditate on the vileness, the demerit, and punishment of sin, as represented in the cross, the blood, the death of Christ. Is Christ crucified for sin, and shall not our hearts be crucified with him to sin? Shall we give entertainment to that, or hearken to its dalliances, which wounded, which pierced, which slew our dear Lord Jesus? God forbid. Fill your affections with the cross of Christ, that there may be no room for sin. The world once put him out of the house into a stable, when he came to save us; let him now turn the world out of doors, when he is come to sanctify us.

Thirdly: Look to the vigour of the affections towards heavenly things. If they are not constantly attended, excited, directed, and warned, they are

apt to decay, and sin lies in wait to take every advantage against them. Many complaints we have in the Scripture, of those who lost their first love, in suffering their affections to decay. And this should make us jealous over our own hearts, lest we also should be overtaken with the same backsliding frame. Wherefore be jealous over them, often strictly examine them, and call them to account, supply to them due considerations for their exciting and stirring up to duty.

CHAPTER XII.

The Conception of Sin through its Deceit—Wherein it consists—The Consent of the Will to Sin—The Nature thereof—Ways and Means whereby it is obtained—Other Advantages made use of by the Deceit of Sin—Ignorance, Errors.

The third success of the deceit of sin, in its progressive work, is the conception of actual sin. When it has drawn the mind off from its duty, and entangled the affections, it proceeds to conceive sin, in order to the bringing of it forth. "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." Now the conception of sin, in order to its perpetration, can be nothing but the consent of the will; for, as without the consent of the will, sin cannot be committed, so where the will has consented to it, there is nothing in the soul to hinder its actual accomplishment. God does indeed, by various ways and means, frustrate the bringing forth of these adulterous conceptions, causing them to melt away in the

mind, or one way or other, prove abortive, so that not the least part of that sin is committed which is willed or conceived; yet there is nothing in the soul itself that remains to give check to it, when once the will has given its consent. Oftentimes, when a cloud is full of rain, and ready to fall, a wind comes and drives it away. And when the will is ready to bring forth its sin, God diverts it, by one wind or other; but yet the cloud was as full of rain as if it had fallen, and the soul as full of sin as if it had been committed.

This conceiving of lust, or sin, then, is its prevalency in obtaining the consent of the will to its solicitations. And hereby the soul is defiled towards God in Christ, as the apostle intimates, 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. To clear up this matter, we must observe:

First: That the will is the principle, the next seat and cause of obedience and disobedience. Moral actions are unto us, or in us, so far good or evil as they partake of the consent of the will. He spoke truth of old, who said, *Omne peccatum est adeo voluntarium, ut non sit peccatum nisi sit voluntarium.* "Every sin is so voluntary, that if it be not voluntary, it is not sin." It is most true of actual sins. The formality of their iniquity arises from the acts of the will in them, and concerning them. I mean as to the persons that commit them; otherwise in itself, the formal reason of sin is its aberration from the law of God.

Secondly: There is a twofold consent of the will to sin.

First: That which is full, absolute, complete, and upon deliberation. A prevailing consent, the convictions of the mind being conquered, and no principle of grace in the will to weaken it. With this

consent, the soul goes into sin as a ship before the wind, with all its sails displayed, without any check or stop. It rushes into sin, like the horse into the battle; men thereby, as the apostle speaks, "giving themselves over to sin with greediness." Ephes. iv. 19. Thus Ahab's will was in the murdering of Naboth, he did it upon deliberation, by contrivance, with a full consent; the doing of it gave him such satisfaction, as that it cured his malady, or the distemper of his mind. This is that consent of the will, which is acted in the finishing and completing of sin in unregenerate persons, and is not required to the single bringing forth of sin, whereof we speak.

Secondly: There is a consent of the will, which is attended with a secret opposition and volition of the contrary. Thus Peter's will was in the denying of his Master. His will was in it, or he had not done it; it was a voluntary action, that which he chose to do at that season. Sin had not been brought forth, if it had not been thus conceived. But yet at this very time, there was resident in his will, a contrary principle of love to Christ, yea, and faith in him, which utterly failed not. The efficacy of it was intercepted, and its operations suspended actually, through the violent urging of the temptation that he was under; but yet it was in his will, and weakened his consent to sin, though it consented; it was not done with self-pleasing, which such full acts of the will do produce.

Thirdly: Although there may be a predominant consent in the will, which may suffice for the conception of particular sins; yet there cannot be an absolute, total, full consent of the will of a believer to any sin: for,

First: There is in his will, a principle fixed on

good, on all good. "He would do good." Rom. vii. 21. The principle of grace in the will inclines him to all good. And this, in general, is prevalent against the principle of sin, so that the will is denominated from thence. Grace has the rule and dominion, and not sin, in the will of every believer. Now that consent to sin in the will, which is contrary to the inclination, and generally prevailing principle in the same will, is not, cannot be total, absolute, and complete.

Secondly: There is not only a general, ruling, prevailing principle in the will against sin, but there is also a secret reluctancy in it to its own act, in consenting to sin. It is true, the soul is not sensible, sometimes, of this reluctancy, because the present consent carries away the prevailing act of the will, and takes away the sense of the lustings of the spirit, or reluctancy of the principle of grace in the will. But the general rule holds in all things, at all times: "The spirit lusteth against the flesh," Gal. v. 17; it does so actually, though not always to the same degree, nor with the same success. And the prevalency of the contrary principle, in this or that particular act, does not disprove it. It is so on the other side; there is no acting of grace in the will, but sin lusts against it; although that lusting be not made sensible in the soul, because of the prevalency of the contrary acting of grace, yet it is enough to keep those actings from perfection in their kind. So is it in this opposition of grace, against the acting of sin in the soul; though it be not sensible in its operations, yet it is enough to keep that act from being full and complete. And much of spiritual wisdom lies in discerning aright between the spiritual opposition of the principle of grace in the will against sin, and

the rebukes that are given the soul by conscience upon conviction for sin.

Fourthly: Observe that reiterated, repeated acts of the consent of the will to sin, may beget a disposition and inclinableness in it to the like acts, that may bring the will to a proneness and readiness to consent to sin, upon easy solicitations, which is a condition dangerous to the soul, and greatly to be watched against.

This consent of the will, which we have thus described, may be considered two ways.

First: As it is exercised about the circumstances, causes, means, and inducements to sin. Secondly, as it respects this or that actual sin. In the first sense, there is a virtual consent of the will to sin, in every inadvertency to the prevention of it, in every neglect of duty that makes way for it, in every hearkening to any temptation leading towards it. In a word, in all the diversions of the mind from its duty, and entanglements of the affections by sin, before mentioned. For where there is no act of the will formally, or virtually, there is no sin. But this is not that which we now speak of; but, in particular, the consent of the will to this or that actual sin, so far as that either sin is committed, or is prevented, by other ways and means, not of our present consideration. And herein consists the conceiving of sin.

These things being supposed, that which, in the next place, we are to consider, is the way that the deceit of sin proceeds in, to procure the consent of the will; and so to conceive actual sin in the soul. To this purpose observe,

First: That the will is a rational appetite. Rational as guided by the mind; and an appetite as excited by the affections; and so, in its operations

or actings, has respect to both, is influenced by both.

Secondly: It chooses nothing, consents to nothing, but as it has an appearance of good, some present good. It cannot consent to any thing under the notion, or apprehension, of its being evil, in any kind. Good is its natural and necessary object, and therefore, whatever is proposed to it for its consent, must be proposed under an appearance of being either good in itself, or good at present to the soul, or good so circumstanced as it is; so that,

Thirdly: We may see hence the reason why the conception of sin is here placed as a consequence of the mind's being drawn away, and the affections being entangled. Both these have an influence on the consent of the will, and the conception of this or that actual sin thereby. Our way, therefore, here is made somewhat plain. We have seen, at large, how the mind is drawn away by the deceit of sin, and how often the affections are entangled; that which remains is but the proper effect of these things; for the discovery whereof we must instance in some of the special deceits, corrupt and fallacious reasonings, before mentioned, and then show their prevalency on the will, to a consent to sin.

First: The will is imposed upon by that corrupt reasoning, that grace is exalted in pardon; and that mercy is provided for sinners. This first as has been shown, deceives the mind, and that opens the way to the will's consent, by removing a sight of evil, which the will has an aversion to. And this, in carnal hearts, prevails so far, as to make them think that their liberty consists in being "servants of corruption." 2 Pet. ii. 19. And the poison of

it, oftentimes, taints and vitiates the minds of believers themselves, whence we are so cautioned against it in Scripture. To what therefore has been spoken before, to the use and abuse of the doctrine of the grace of the gospel, we shall add some few other considerations and fix upon one place of Scripture that will give light to it. There is a twofold mystery of grace; of walking with God, and of coming to God. And the great design of sin is, to change the doctrine and mystery of grace in reference to these things, and that by applying those considerations to the one which are proper to the other, whereby each part is hindered, and the influence of the doctrine of grace on them, for their furtherance, defeated. "These things write I unto you that ye sin not; and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." 1 John ii. 1, 2. Here is the whole design and use of the gospel briefly expressed; "These things," saith he, "I write unto you;" what things were these? Those mentioned, chap. i. ver. 2. "The life was manifest, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you, that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;" that is, the things concerning the person and mediation of Christ: and, ver. 7, that pardon, forgiveness, and expiation from sin, is to be attained by the blood of Christ. But to what end and purpose does he write these things to them? What do they teach, what do they tend to? A universal abstinence from sin; "I write unto you," saith he, "that you sin not." This is the proper, only, genuine end of the doctrine of the gospel. But to abstain from all sin is not our condition in this world. "If we say that we have no sin, we

deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1 John i. 8. What then shall be done in this case? In supposition of sin, that we have sinned, is there no relief provided for our souls and consciences in the gospel? Yes, saith he, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is a propitiation for our sins." There is full relief in the propitiation and intercession of Christ for us. This is the order and method of the doctrine of the gospel, and of the application of it to our own souls: first to keep us from sin: and then to relieve us against sin. But here entereth the deceit of sin, and puts this "new wine into old bottles," whereby the bottles are broken, and the wine perishes, as to our benefit by it. It changes this method and order of the application of gospel truths. It takes up the last first, and that excludes the use of the first utterly. If any man sin, there is pardon provided, is all the gospel that sin would willingly suffer to abide on the minds of men. When we would come to God by believing, it would be pressing the former part, of being free from sin, when the gospel proposes the latter principally, or the pardon of sin for our encouragement. When we are come to God, and should walk with him, it will have only the latter proposed, that there is pardon of sin; when the gospel principally proposes the former, of keeping ourselves from sin. The grace of God brings salvation, having appeared unto us to that end and purpose. Now the mind being entangled with this deceit, drawn off from its watch by it, diverted from the true ends of the gospel, does several ways impose upon the will, to obtain its consent.

First: by a sudden surprise in case of temptation. Temptation is the representation of a thing as a

present good, a particular good, which is a real evil, a general evil. Now when a temptation, armed with opportunity and provocation, befalls the soul, the principle of grace in the will rises up with a rejection and detestation of it. But on a sudden the mind, being deceived by sin, breaks in upon the will, with a corrupt, fallacious reasoning from gospel grace and mercy, which first staggers, then abates, the will's opposition, and then causes it to cast the scale, by its consent on the side of temptation, presenting evil as a present good; and sin, in the sight of God, is conceived, though it be never committed. Thus is the seed of God sacrificed to Moloch, and the weapons of Christ abused to the service of the devil.

Secondly: It does it insensibly. It insinuates the poison of this corrupt reasoning by little and little, until it has greatly prevailed. And as the whole effect of the doctrine of the gospel in holiness and obedience, consists in the soul's being cast into the frame and mould of it, Rom. vi. 17, so the whole of apostasy from the gospel, is principally the casting of the soul into the mould of this false reasoning, that sin may be indulged in, upon account of grace and pardon. Hereby is the soul gratified in sloth and negligence, and taken off from its care as to particular duties, and avoidance of particular sins. It works the soul, insensibly, off from the mystery of the law of grace, to look for salvation, as if we had never performed any duty, being, after we have done all, unprofitable servants, with a resting on sovereign mercy through the blood of Christ, and to attend to duties with all diligence, as if we looked for no mercy; that is, with no less care, though with more liberty and freedom. This the deceitfulness of sin endeavours, by all means, to work

the soul from, and thereby debauches the will, when its consent is required to particular sins.

Thirdly: The deceived mind imposes on the will to obtain its consent to sin, by proposing to it the advantages that may accrue and arise thereby, which is one medium whereby itself also is drawn away. It renders that which is absolutely evil, a present-appearing good. So was it with Eve, Gen. iii.; laying aside all considerations of the law, covenant, and threats of God, she all at once reflects upon the advantages, pleasures and benefits which she should obtain by her sin, and reckons them up, to solicit the consent of her will. "It is," says she, "good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise." What should she do then but eat it? her will consented, and she did so accordingly. Pleas for obedience are laid out of the way, and only the pleasures of sin are taken under consideration. So says Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. Naboth's vineyard is near my house, and I may make it a garden of herbs, therefore I must have it. These considerations a deceived mind imposed on his will, until it made him obstinate in the pursuit of his covetousness, through perjury and murder, to the utter ruin of himself and his family. Thus is the guilt and tendency of sin hid under the covert of advantages and pleasures, and so is conceived or resolved on in the soul.

Fourthly: As the mind being withdrawn, so the affections being enticed and entangled, do greatly further the conception of sin in the soul by the consent of the will; and they do it in two ways.

First: By some hasty impulse and surprisal. Being themselves stirred up, incited, and drawn forth by some violent provocation, or suitable temptation, they put the whole soul, as it were, into a combus-

tion, and draw the will into a consent to what they are provoked to and entangled with. So was the case of David in the matter of Nabal. A violent provocation, from the extreme unworthy carriage of that foolish churl, stirs him up to wrath and revenge; he resolves upon it, to destroy a whole family, the innocent with the guilty. 1 Sam. xxv. 13, 34, 35. Self-revenge and murder were, for the season, conceived, resolved, consented to, until God graciously took him off. His entangled, provoked affections, surprised his will to consent to the conception of many bloody sins. The case was the same with Asa in his anger, when he smote the prophet; and with Peter in his fear, when he denied his Master. Let that soul which would take heed of conceiving sin, take heed of entangling affections; for sin may be suddenly conceived, the prevalent consent of the will may be suddenly obtained, which gives the soul a fixed guilt, though the sin itself be never actually brought forth.

Secondly: Enticed affections procure the consent of the will by frequent solicitations, whereby they get ground insensibly upon it, and enthrone themselves. Take an instance in the sons of Jacob. Gen. xxxvii. 4. They hate their brother, because their father loved him. Their affections being enticed, many new occasions fall out to entangle them further, as his dreams, and the like. This lay rankling in their hearts, and never ceased soliciting their wills, until they resolved upon his death. The unlawfulness, the unnaturalness, of the action, the grief of their aged father, the guilt of their own souls, are all laid aside; that hatred and envy that they had conceived against him ceased not, until they had got the consent of their wills to his ruin.

This gradual progress of the prevalency of corrupt affections, to solicit the soul to sin, the wise man excellently describes, Prov. xxiii. 31—35. And this is the common way of sin's procedure in the destruction of souls, which seem to have made some good engagements in the ways of God. When it hath entangled them with one temptation, and brought the will to some liking of it, that presently becomes another temptation, either to the neglect of some duty, or to the refusal of more light: and, commonly, that whereby men fall off utterly from God, is not that wherewith they are first entangled. And this may briefly suffice for the third progressive act of the deceit of sin. It obtains the will's consent to its conception; and, by this means, are multitudes of sins conceived in the heart, which very little less defile the soul, or cause it to contract very little less guilt, than if they were actually committed.

Unto what has been spoken concerning the deceitfulness of indwelling sin in general, which greatly evidences its power and efficacy, I shall add, as a close of this discourse, one or two particular ways of its deceitful actings, consisting in advantages that it makes use of, and means of relieving itself against that disquisition which is made after it, by the word and spirit, for its ruin. One head only, of each sort, we shall here name.

First: It makes great advantage of the darkness of the mind, to work out its design and intentions. The shades of a mind totally dark, that is, utterly devoid of saving grace, are the proper working place of sin. Hence the effects of it are called the "works of darkness," Ephes. v. 11; Rom. xiii. 12, as springing from thence. Sin works and brings forth by the help of it. The working of lust un-

der the covert of a dark mind, is, as it were, the upper region of hell; for it lies at the next door to it, for filth, horror, and confusion. Now there is a partial darkness abiding still in believers; they "know but in part." 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Though there be in them all a principle of saving light, the day-star is risen in their hearts; yet all the shades of darkness are not utterly expelled out of them in this life. And there are two parts, as it were, or principal effects, of the remaining darkness that is in believers: First, ignorance or nescience of the will of God, either *juris* or *facti*, of the rule and law in general, or of the reference of the particular fact, that lies before the mind, to the law. Secondly, error and mistakes, positively taking that for truth which is falsehood, and that for light which is darkness. Now of both these does the law of sin make great advantage, for the exerting of its power in the soul.

First: Is there a remaining ignorance of any thing of the will of God? sin will be sure to make use of it, and improve it to the uttermost. Though Abimelech was not a believer, yet he was a person that had a moral integrity with him in his ways and actions: he declares himself to have had this, in a solemn appeal to God, the searcher of all hearts, even in that wherein he miscarried, Gen. xx. 5. But being ignorant that fornication was a sin, or so great a sin, as that it became not a morally honest man to defile himself with it, lust hurries him into that intention of evil, in reference to Sarah, as we have it there related. God complains that his people "perished for lack of knowledge." Hos. iv. 6. Being ignorant of the mind and will of God, they rushed into evil at every command of the law of sin. Be it as to any duty to be performed, or as

to any sin to be committed, if there be in it darkness or ignorance of the mind about them, sin will not lose its advantage. Many a man being ignorant of the duty incumbent upon him, for the instruction of his family, casting the whole weight of it upon the public teaching, is, by the deceitfulness of sin, brought into an habitual sloth and negligence of duty; so much ignorance of the will of God and duty, so much advantage is given to the law of sin. And hence we may see what is that true knowledge which with God is acceptable; how exactly does many a poor soul, who is low as to notional knowledge, yet walk with God! It seems they know so much, as sin has not, on that account, much advantage against them; when others, high in their notions, give advantage to their lusts, even by their ignorance, though they know it not.

Secondly: Error is a worse part or effect of the mind's darkness, and gives great advantage to the law of sin. There is, indeed, ignorance in every error, but there is not error in all ignorance, and so they may be distinguished. I shall need to exemplify this but with one consideration, and that is, of men who, being zealous for some error, do seek to suppress and persecute the truth. Indwelling sin desires no greater advantage. How will it, every day, every hour, pour forth wrath, revilings, hard speeches: breathe revenge, murder, desolation, under the name perhaps of zeal. On this account we may see poor creatures pleasing themselves every day, as if they vaunted in their excellency, when they are foaming out their own shame. Under their real darkness and pretended zeal, sin sits securely, and fills pulpits, houses, prayers, streets, with as bitter fruits of envy, ma-

lice, wrath, hatred, evil surmises, false speakings, as full as they can hold. The common issue with such poor creatures, is, the holy, blessed, meek Spirit of God withdraws from them, and leaves them, visibly and openly to that evil, froward, wrathful, worldly spirit, which the law of sin has cherished and heightened in them. Sin dwells not any where more secure than in such a frame. Thus, I say, it lays hold in particular of advantages to practise upon, with its deceitfulness, and therein also to exert its power in the soul, whereof this single instance of its improving the darkness of the mind to its own ends, is a sufficient evidence.

Thirdly: It uses means of relieving itself against the pursuit that is made after it in the heart by the word and Spirit of grace. One also of its wiles, in the way of instance, I shall name in this kind, and that is, the alleviation of its own guilt. It pleads for itself, that it is not so bad, so filthy, so fatal as is pretended; and this course of extenuation proceeds in two ways. First, absolutely; many secret pleas it will have, that the evil which it tends to is not so pernicious as conscience is persuaded that it is; it may be ventured on without ruin. These considerations it will strongly urge, when it is at work in a way of surprisal, when the soul has no leisure or liberty to weigh its suggestions in the balance of the sanctuary; and not seldom is the will imposed on hereby, and advantages gotten to shift itself from under the sword of the Spirit. It is not such but that it may be let alone, or suffered to die of itself, which probably within a while it may do; no need of that violence, which in mortification is to be offered; it is time enough to deal with a matter of no greater importance hereafter;

with other pleas like those before mentioned. Secondly, comparatively; and this is a large field for its deceit and subtlety to lurk in. Though it is an evil indeed to be relinquished, and the soul is to be made watchful against it, yet it is not of that magnitude and degree, as we may see in the lives of others, even saints of God, much less such as some saints of old have fallen into. By these and the like pretences, I say, it seeks to evade and keep its abode in the soul, when pursued to destruction. And how little a portion of its deceitfulness is it that we have declared.

CHAPTER XIII.

Several ways whereby the bringing forth of conceived sin is obstructed.

Before we proceed to the remaining evidences of the power and efficacy of the law of sin, we shall take occasion, from what has been delivered, to advert to one consideration that offers itself from that Scripture, which was made the bottom and foundation of our discourse of the general deceitfulness of sin; namely, James i. 14. The apostle tells us, that "lust conceiving brings forth sin;" seeming to intimate, that whatever sin is conceived, that also is brought forth. Now placing the conception of sin, as we have done, in the consent of the will to it, and reckoning, as we ought the bringing forth of sin to consist in its actual commission, we know that these do not necessarily follow one another. There is a world of sin conceived in the womb of the wills and hearts of men, that is never brought

forth. Our present business then shall be to inquire, Whence that comes to pass? I answer then,

First: That this is not so, is no thanks to sin, nor the law of it. What it conceives, it would bring forth; and that it does not, is for the most part, but a small abatement of its guilt. A determinate will of actual sinning, is actual sin. There is nothing wanting on sin's part, that every conceived sin is not actually accomplished. The obstacle and prevention lies on another hand.

Secondly: There are two things that are necessary in the creature that has conceived sin, for the bringing of it forth. First, Power. Secondly, Continuance in the will of sinning, until it be perpetrated and committed. Where these two are, actual sin will unavoidably ensue. It is evident therefore, that that which hinders conceived sin from being brought forth, must affect either the power or the will of the sinner. This must be from God. And he has two ways of doing it. First, By his providence, whereby he obstructs the power of sinning. Secondly, By his grace, whereby he diverts or changes the will of sinning. I do not mention these ways of God's dispensations thus distinctly, as though the one of them were always without the other; for there is much of grace in providential administrations, and much of the wisdom of providence seen in the dispensations of grace. But I place them in this distinction, because they appear most eminent therein. Providence, in outward acts, respecting the power of the creature; grace, common or special, in internal efficacy, respecting his will. And we shall begin with the first

First: When sin is conceived, the Lord obstructs its production by his providence, in taking away, or

taking short, that power, which is absolutely necessary for its bringing forth, or accomplishment. As,

1st. Life is the foundation of all power, the principle of operation. When that ceases, all power ceases with it. Even God himself, to evince the everlasting stability of his own power, gives himself the title of the Living God. Now he frequently obviates the power of exerting sin actually, by cutting short, and taking away, the lives of them that have conceived it. Thus he dealt with the army of Sennacherib, when, according as he had purposed, so he threatened, that "the Lord should not deliver Jerusalem out of his hand." 2 Kings xviii. 35. God threatens to cut short his power, that he should not execute his intention, chap. xix. 28, which he performs accordingly, by taking away the lives of his soldiers, ver. 35, without whom it was impossible that his conceived sin should be brought forth. This providential dispensation in the obstruction of conceived sin, Moses excellently sets forth in the case of Pharaoh, "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my lusts shall be satisfied upon them: I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them, they sank as lead in the mighty waters;" Exod. xv. 9, 19. Sin's conception is fully expressed, and as full a prevention is annexed to it. In like manner he dealt with the companies of fifties and their captains, who came to apprehend Elijah, 2 Kings i. 10, 11, fire came down from heaven and consumed them, when they were ready to have taken him. And sundry other instances of the like nature might be recorded. That which is of universal concernment, we have in that great providential alteration, which put a period to the lives

of men. Men living hundreds of years, had a long season to bring forth the sins they had conceived: thereupon the earth was filled with violence, injustice, and rapine; and all "flesh corrupted their ways." Gen. vi. 12, 19. To prevent the like inundation of sin, God shortens the course of the pilgrimage of men in the earth, and reduces their lives to a much shorter measure. Besides this general law, God daily thus cuts off persons, who had conceived much mischief and violence in their hearts, and prevents the execution of it. "Bloodthirsty and deceitful men do not live out half their days." They have yet much work to do, might they have but space given them to execute the bloody and sinful purposes of their minds. The Psalmist tells us, "In the day that the breath of man goeth forth, his thoughts perish," Psal. cxlvi. 4, he had many contrivances about sin, but now they are all cut off. So also the wise man, "Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged; yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him; but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God." Eccles. viii. 12, 13. How long soever a wicked man lives, yet he dies judicially, and shall not abide to do the evil he had conceived.

But now, seeing we have granted that even believers themselves may conceive sin, through the power and deceitfulness of it, it may be inquired whether God ever thus obviates its production and accomplishment in them, by cutting off, and taking away their lives, so as that they shall not be able to perform it: I answer,

First: That God does not judicially cut off,

and take away the life of any of his, for this end and purpose, that he may thereby prevent the execution, or bringing forth of any particular sin that he had conceived, and which, without that taking away, he would have perpetrated. For,

1st. This is directly contrary to the very declared end of the patience of God towards them. 2 Pet. iii. 9. This is the very end of the long suffering of God towards believers, that before they depart hence, they may come to the sense, acknowledgment, and repentance of every known sin. This is the constant and unchangeable rule of God's patience in the covenant of grace; which is so far from being, in them, an encouragement to sin, that it is a motive to universal watchfulness against it, of the same nature with all gospel grace and of mercy in the blood of Christ. Now this dispensation whereof we speak, would lie in a direct contradiction to it.

Secondly: This also flows from the former, that whereas conceived sin contains the whole nature of it, as our Saviour at large declares, Matt. v. and to be cut off under the guilt of it, to prevent its further progress, argues a continuance in the purpose of it without repentance; it cannot be but they must perish for ever, who are so judicially cut off. But God deals not so with his, he casts not off the people whom he did foreknow. And thence David prays for the patience of God before mentioned, that it might not be so with him, "O spare me that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be no more." Psal. xxxix. 13. But yet,

2dly. There are some cases wherein God may, and does, take away the lives of his own, to prevent the guilt that otherwise they would be involved in; as,

First: in the coming of some great temptation and trial upon the world. God knowing that such and such of his would not be able to withstand it, and hold out against it, but would dishonour him, and defile themselves, may and doubtless often does, take them out of the world, to take them out of the way of it; "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come," Isa. lvii. 1; not only the evil of punishment and judgment, but the evil of temptations and trials, which oftentimes prove much the worse of the two. Thus a captain in war, will call off his soldier from his watch and guard, when he knows he is not able, through some infirmity, to bear the stress and force of the enemy that is coming upon him.

Secondly: In case of their engagement in any way not acceptable to him, through ignorance, or not knowing of his mind and will. This seems to have been the case of Josiah. And doubtless the Lord does oftentimes thus proceed with his. When any of his own are engaged in ways which please him not, through the darkness and ignorance of their minds, that they may not proceed to further evil or mischief, he calls them off from their station and employment, and takes them to himself, where they shall err and mistake no more. But in ordinary cases, God has other ways of diverting his own from sin, than by killing them, as we shall see afterwards.

Thirdly: God providentially hinders the bringing forth of conceived sin, by taking away, and cutting short the power of them that had conceived it; so that though their lives continue, they shall not have that power, without which it is impossible for them to execute what they had intended, or to bring forth what they had conceived. Hereof

also we have sundry instances. This was the case with the builders of Babel: whatever it were in particular that they aimed at, it was in pursuit of a design of apostasy from God. One thing requisite to the accomplishment of what they aimed at, was the oneness of their language; so God says, "They have all one language, and this they begin to do, and now nothing will be restrained from them that they have imagined to do." Gen. xi. 6. In an ordinary way they will accomplish their wicked design. What course does God now take to obviate their conceived sin? Does he bring a flood upon them to destroy them, as in the old world some time before? Does he send his angel to cut them off, like the army of Sennacherib afterwards? Does he by any means take away their lives? No, their lives are continued, but he confounds their language, so that they cannot go on with their work; he takes away that wherein their power consisted. In like manner did he proceed with the Sodomites. They were engaged in, and set upon the pursuit of their filthy lusts. God smites them with blindness, Gen. xix. 11, so that they could not find the door where they thought to have used violence for the compassing their ends; their lives were continued, and their will of sinning, but their power is cut short and abridged. His dealing with Jeroboam was of the same nature. He stretched out his hand, to lay hold of the prophet, 1 Kings xiii. 4, and it withered and became useless. And this is an eminent way of the effectual acting of God's providence in the world, for the stopping of that inundation of sin, which would overflow the earth, were every spring of it opened. He cuts men short of their moral power whereby they should effect it. Many a wretch that has conceived mis-

chief against the church of God, has, by this means, been divested of his power, whereby he thought to accomplish it. Some have their bodies smitten with diseases, so that they can no more serve their lusts, nor accompany them in the perpetrating of folly. Some are deprived of the instruments whereby they would work. There has been for many days, sin and mischief enough conceived to root out the generation of the righteous from the face of the earth, had men strength and ability to their will, did not God cut off and shorten their power, and the days of their prevalency. "They search out iniquities, they accomplish a diligent search, both the inward thought of every one of them and the heart is deep." Psal. lxiv. 6. All things are in readiness, the design is well laid, their counsels are deep and secret. What now shall hinder them from doing whatever they have imagined to do? "But God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded: So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves," ver. 7, 8. God meets with them, brings them down, that they shall not be able to accomplish their design. And this way of God's preventing sin, seems to be at least ordinarily, peculiar to the men of the world: God deals thus with them every day, and leaves them to pine away in their sins. They go all their days big with the iniquity they have conceived, and are greatly burdened that they cannot be delivered of it. The prophet tells us, "that they practise iniquity that they had conceived, because it is in the power of their hand." Mic. ii. 1. If they have power for it, they will accomplish it: "To their power they shed blood." Ezek. xxii. 6. This is the measure of their sinning, even their power.

They do many of them, no more evil, they commit no more sin, than they can. Their whole restraint lies in being cut short in power, in one kind or another. Their bodies will not serve for them for their contrived uncleannesses, nor their hands for their revenge and rapine, nor their instruments for persecution; but they go, burdened with conceived sin, and are disquieted and tortured by it all their days. And hence they become, in themselves, as well as to others, a "troubled sea that cannot rest." Isa. lvii. 20.

It may be also, in some cases, under some violent temptations, or in mistakes, God may thus obviate the accomplishment of conceived sin in his own. And there seems to be an instance of it in his dealing with Jehoshaphat, who had designed, against the mind of God, to join in affinity with Ahab, and to send his ships with him to Tarshish; but God breaks his ships by a wind, that he could not accomplish what he had designed. But in God's dealings with his in this way, there is a difference from the same dispensation toward others; for,

First: It is so only in cases of extraordinary temptation. When, through the violence of temptation, and craft of Satan, they are hurried from under the conduct of the law of grace, God, one way or other, takes away their power, or may do so, that they shall not be able to execute what they have designed. But this is an ordinary way of dealing with wicked men. This hook of God is upon them in the whole course of their lives; and they struggle with it, being as a wild bull in a net. Isa. li. 20. God's net is upon them, and they are filled with fury, that they cannot do all the wickedness that they would.

Secondly: God does it not to leave them to wrestle with sin, and to attempt other ways of its accomplishment, upon the failure of that which they were engaged in, but by their disappointment awakens them to consider their condition, and what they are doing, and so consumes sin in the womb, by ways that shall afterwards be insisted on. Some men's deprivation of power, for the committing of conceived, contrived sin, has been sanctified, to the changing of their hearts from all dalliances with that or other sins.

Thirdly: God providentially hinders the bringing forth of conceived sin by opposing an external hindering power to sinners. He leaves them their lives, and leaves them power to do what they intend, only he raises up an opposite power, to coerce, forbid, and restrain them. An instance whereof is this: Saul had sworn that Jonathan should be put to death, and as far as appears, went on resolutely to have slain him. God stirs up the spirit of the people, they oppose themselves to the wrath and fury of Saul, and Jonathan is delivered. 1 Sam. xiv. 45. So also, when King Uzziah would have, in his own person, offered incense contrary to the law, eighty men of the priests resisted him and drove him out of the temple, 2 Chron. xxvi. 17, 18, 19. And to this head are to be referred all the assistances which God stirs up for the deliverance of his people against the fury of persecutors. He raises up saviours or deliverers on mount Zion, to judge the mount of Edom. So when the dragon, and those acting under him, spirited by him, were in a furious endeavour for the destruction of the church, Rev. xii. 16, God stirs up the earth to her assistance; even men of the world, not engaged with others in the design

of Satan, and by their opposition hinders them from the execution of their designed rage. Of this nature, seems to be that dealing of God with his own people, spoken of by the prophet, Hos. ii. 6, 7, they were in the pursuit of their iniquities, following after their lovers; God leaves them, for a time, to act in the folly of their spirits, but he sets a hedge, and a wall before them, that they shall not be able to fulfil their designs and lusts.

Fourthly: God obviates the accomplishment of conceived sin, by removing or taking away the objects on whom, or about whom, the sin conceived was to be committed. Acts ii. 11, yields us a signal instance of this issue of providence. When the day was coming wherein Herod thought to have slain Peter, who was shut up in prison, God sends and takes him away from their rage, and lying in wait. So also was our Saviour himself taken away from the murderous rage of the Jews, before his hour was come. John viii. 59, chap. x. 39. Both primitive and latter times are full of stories to this purpose: prison doors have been opened, and poor creatures appointed to die have been frequently rescued from the jaws of death. In the world itself, amongst the men thereof, adulterers, and adulteresses, the sin of the one is often hindered and stifled by the taking away of the other. So wings were given to the woman, to carry her into the wilderness, and to disappoint the world in the execution of their rage. Rev. xii. 14.

Fifthly: God does this by some eminent diversions of the thoughts of men who had conceived sin. The brethren of Joseph cast him into a pit, Gen. xxxvii. 24, with an intent to famish him there: whilst they were, as it seems, pleasing themselves with what they had done, God orders a

company of merchants to come by, and diverts their thoughts with that new object, from the killing to the selling of their brother, ver. 26, 27. And how far therein they were subservient to the infinitely wise counsel of God, we know. Thus also when Saul was in pursuit of David, and was even ready to prevail against him to his destruction, God stirs up the Philistines to invade the land, which both diverted his thoughts, and drew the course of his actings another way. 1 Sam. xxvii. 27.

And these are some of the ways whereby God is pleased to hinder the bringing forth of conceived sin, by opposing himself and his providence to the power of the sinning creature. And we may a little in our passage, take a brief view of the great advantages to faith and the church of God, which may be found in this matter. As,

First: This may give us a little insight into the ever to be adored providence of God, by these and the like ways in great variety, obstructing the breaking forth of sin in the world. It is he who makes those dams, and shuts up those floodgates of corrupted nature, that it shall not break forth in a deluge of filthy abominations, to overwhelm the creation with confusion and disorder. As it was of old, so it is at this day; "Every thought and imagination of the heart of man is evil, and that continually." That all the earth is not, in all places, filled with violence, as it was of old, is merely from the mighty hand of God, working effectually for the obstructing of sin. From hence alone it is, that the highways, streets, and fields are not all filled with violence, blood, rapine, uncleanness, and every villany that the heart of man can conceive. O the infinite beauty of Divine wisdom and providence in the government of the world! for the conservation

of it asks daily no less power and wisdom than the first making of it did require.

Secondly: If we will look to our own concernments, they will in a special manner, enforce us to adore the wisdom and efficacy of the providence of God, in stopping the progress of conceived sin. That we are at peace in our houses, at rest in our beds, that we have any quiet in our enjoyments, is from hence alone. Whose person would not be defiled or destroyed? whose habitation would not be ruined? whose blood, almost, would not be shed, if wicked men had power to perpetrate all their conceived sin? It may be, the ruin of some of us has been conceived a thousand times. We are beholden to this providence of obstructing sin, for our lives, our families, our estates, our liberties, for whatsoever is, or may be dear to us. For may we not say sometimes with the Psalmist, "My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." Psalm lvii. 4. And how is the deliverance of men contrived from such persons? "God breaks their teeth, in their mouths, even the great teeth of the young lions," lviii. 6. He keeps this fire from burning, or quenches it when it is ready to break out into a flame. He breaks their spears and arrows, so that sometimes we are not so much as wounded by them. Some he cuts off and destroys, some he cuts short in their power, some he deprives of the instruments whereby alone they can work, some he prevents of their desired opportunities, or diverts by other objects for their lusts, and oftentimes causes them to spend them among themselves, one upon another. We may say, therefore, with the Psalmist, "O Lord, how manifold are thy

works; in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches, civ. 24: and with the prophet, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things; prudent, and he shall know them: all the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein." Hos. xiv. 9.

Thirdly: If these and the like are the ways whereby God obviates the bringing forth of conceived sin in wicked men, we may learn hence how miserable their condition is, and in what perpetual torment, for the most part, they spend their days: they are like a "troubled sea," saith the Lord, "that cannot rest." As they endeavour that others may have no peace, so it is certain that themselves have not any; the principle of sin is not impaired nor weakened in them, the will of sinning is not taken away: they have a womb of sin, that is able to conceive monsters every moment. Yea, for the most part they are forging and framing folly all the day long: one lust or other they are contriving how to satisfy: they are either devouring by malice and revenge, or vitiating by uncleanness, or trampling on by ambition, or swallowing down by covetousness, all that stand before them. Many of their follies and mischiefs they bring to the very birth, and are in pain to be delivered; but God every day fills them with disappointment, and prevents their sin. Some are filled with hatred of God's people all their days, and never once have an opportunity to exercise it. So David describes them; "They return at evening, they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. They go up and down and belch out with their mouths; swords are in their lips," Psalm lix. 6, 7, and yet are not able to accomplish their designs; what tor-

ture do such poor creatures live in! Envy, malice, wrath, revenge, devour their hearts by not getting vent. And when God has exercised the other acts of his wise providence in cutting short their power, or opposing a greater power to them, when nothing else will do, he cuts them off in their sins, and to the grave they go, full of purposes of iniquity. Others are no less hurried and diverted by the power of other lusts, which they are not able to satisfy: this is the sore travail they are exercised with all their days. If they accomplish their designs they are more wicked and hellish than before: and if they do not, they are filled with vexation and discontent. This is the portion of them who know not the Lord, nor the power of his grace. Envy not their condition; notwithstanding their outward glittering show, their hearts are full of anxiety, trouble, and sorrow.

Fourthly: Do we see, sometimes, the floodgates of men's lusts and rage set open against the church and interest of it, and doth prevalency attend them, and is power, for a season, on their side? let not the saints of God despond. He hath unspeakably various and effectual ways for the stifling of their conceptions. He can stop their fury when he pleaseth: "Surely," saith the Psalmist, "the wrath of man shall praise thee, the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." Psalm lxxvi. 10. When so much of their wrath is let out as shall exalt his praise, he can, when he pleases, set up a power greater than the combined strength of all sinning creatures, and restrain the remainder of the wrath that they have conceived. "He shall cut off the spirit of princes, he is terrible to the kings of the earth," Psalm lxxvi. 12. Some he will cut off and

destroy, some he will terrify and affright, and prevent the rage of all. He can knock them on the head, or break out their teeth, or chain up their wrath, and who can oppose him?

Fifthly: Those who have received benefit by any of the ways mentioned, may know to whom they owe their preservation, and not look on it as a common thing. When you have conceived sin, hath God weakened your power from sin, or denied you opportunity, or taken away the object of your lusts, or diverted your thoughts by new providences? know assuredly that you have received mercy thereby. Though God deal not these providences always in a subserviency to the covenant of grace, yet there is always mercy in them; always a call in them to consider the author of them. Had not God thus dealt with you, it may be, you had this day been a terror to yourselves, a shame to your relations, and under the punishment due to some notorious sins which you had conceived. Besides, there is commonly an additional guilt in sin brought forth, above what is in the mere conception of it. It may be, others would have been ruined by it here, or drawn into a partnership in sin by it, and so have been eternally ruined by it, all which are prevented by these providences; and eternity will witness, that there is a singularity of mercy in them. Do not look then on any such things as common accidents, the hand of God is in them all: and that a merciful hand, if not despised: if it be, yet God does good to others by it: the world is the better, and you are not so wicked as you would be.

Sixthly: We may also see hence the great use of magistracy in the world, that great appointment of God. Amongst other things, it is peculiarly

subservient to this holy providence, in obstructing the bringing forth of conceived sin; namely, by the terror of him that bears the sword. God fixes that on the hearts of evil men which he expresses: "If thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for the power bears not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on them that do evil." Rom. xiii. 4. God fixes this on the hearts of men, and by the dread and terror of it closes the womb of sin, that it shall not bring forth. When there was no king in Israel, none to put to rebuke, and none of whom evil men were afraid, there was woful work and havoc amongst the children of men made in the world, as we may see in the last chapters of the book of Judges. The greatest mercies and blessings that in this world we are made partakers of, next to them of the gospel and covenant of grace, come to us through this channel and conduit. And, indeed, this whereof we have been speaking, is the proper work of magistracy, namely, to be subservient to the providence of God, in obstructing the bringing forth of conceived sin.

These, then, are some of the ways whereby God providentially prevents the bringing forth of sin, by opposing obstacles to the power of the sinner. And by them sin is not consumed, but shut up in the womb. Men are not burdened for it, but with it; not laden in their hearts and consciences with its guilt, but perplexed with its power, which they are not able to exert and satisfy.

The way that yet remains for consideration, whereby God obviates the production of conceived sin, is his working on the will of the sinner, so making sin to consume away in the womb.

There are two ways, in general, whereby God

thus prevents the bringing forth of conceived sin, by working on the will of the sinner; and they are first, by restraining grace: secondly, by renewing grace. He does it, sometimes the one way, sometimes the other. The first of these is common to regenerate and unregenerate persons, the latter peculiar to believers: and God does it variously, as to particulars, by them both. We shall begin with the first of them.

First: God does this in the way of restraining grace, by some arrow of particular conviction fixed in the heart and conscience of the sinner, in reference to the particular sin which he had conceived. This staggers and changes the mind, as to the particular intended, causes the hands to hang down, and the weapons of lust to fall out of them. Hereby conceived sin proves abortive. How God does this work, by what immediate touches, strokes, blows, rebukes of Spirit; by what reasonings, arguments, and commotions of men's own consciences, is not for us thoroughly to find out. It is done, as was said, in unspeakable variety, and the works of God are past finding out. But as to what light may be given to it from Scripture instances, after we have manifested the general way of God's procedure, it shall be insisted on.

Thus, then, God dealt in the case of Esau and Jacob. Esau had long conceived his brother's death; he comforted himself with the thoughts of it, and resolutions about it, Gen. xxvii. 41: as is the manner of profligate sinners. Upon his first opportunity, he comes forth to execute his intended rage, and Jacob concludes that he would "smite the mother with the children," chap. xxxii. 11. An opportunity is presented to this wicked and profane person, to bring forth that sin that had lain in

his heart now twenty years; he had full power in his hand to perform his purpose. In the midst of this posture of things, God comes in upon his heart, with some secret and effectual working of his Spirit and power, changes him from his purpose, causes his conceived sin to melt away, that he falls upon the neck of him with embraces, whom he thought to have slain.

Of the same nature, though the way of it was peculiar, was his dealing with Laban the Syrian, in reference to the same Jacob, Gen. xxxi. 24. By a dream, a vision in the night, God hinders him from so much as speaking roughly to him. It was with him as in Micah ii. 1, he had devised evil on his bed, and when he thought to have practised it in the morning, God interposed in a dream, and hides sin from him, as Elihu speaks, Job xxxiii. 15—17. To the same purpose is that of the Psalmist concerning the people of God, "He made them to be pitied of all those who carried them captives." Psalm cvi. 46. Men usually deal in rigour with those whom they have taken captive in war. It was the way of old, to rule captives with force and cruelty. Here God turns and changes their hearts, not in general to himself, but to this particular, of respect to his people. And this way in general does God every day prevent the bringing forth of a world of sin. He sharpens arrows of conviction upon the spirits of men, as to the particular that they are engaged in. Their hearts are not changed, as to sin; but their minds are altered as to this or that sin. They break, it may be, the vessel they had fashioned, and go to work upon some other. Now that we may a little see into the ways whereby God accomplishes this work, we must premise the ensuing considerations.

First: That the general medium wherein the matter of restraining grace consists, whereby God thus prevents the bringing forth of sin, lies in certain arguments and reasonings, presented to the mind of the sinner, whereby he is induced to desert his purpose, to change and alter his mind, as to the sin he had conceived. Reasons against it are presented to him, which prevail upon him to relinquish his design, and give over his purpose. This is the general way of the working of restraining grace, it is by arguments and reasonings rising up against the perpetration of conceived sin.

Secondly: That no arguments or reasonings, as such, materially considered, are sufficient to stop or hinder any purposes of sinning, or to cause conceived sin to prove abortive, if the sinner have power and opportunity to bring it forth. They are not, in themselves, and on their own account, restraining grace; for if they were, the administration and communication of grace, as grace, were left to every man who is able to give advice against sin. Nothing is, nor can be called grace, though common, and such as may perish, but with respect to its peculiar relation to God. God by the power of his Spirit, making arguments and reasons effectual and prevailing, turns that to be grace, I mean of this kind, which in itself, and in its own nature, was bare reason. And that efficacy of the Spirit, which the Lord puts forth in these persuasions and motives, is that which we call restraining grace. These things being premised we shall now consider some of the arguments which we find that he has made use of to this end and purpose.

First: God stops many men in their ways upon the conception of sin, by an argument taken from the difficulty, if not impossibility, of doing that they

aim at. They have a mind to it, but God sets a hedge and a wall before them, that they shall judge it to be so hard and difficult to accomplish what they intend, that it is better for them to let it alone, and give over. Thus Herod would have put John Baptist to death upon the first provocation, but he feared the multitude, because they accounted him as a prophet, Matt. xiv. 5. He had conceived his murder, and was free for the execution of it. God raised this consideration in his heart, If I kill him, the people will tumultuate, he has a great party amongst them, and sedition will arise, that may cost me my life, or kingdom. He feared the multitude, and durst not execute the wickedness he had conceived, because of the difficulty he foresaw he should be entangled with. And God made the argument effectual for the season; for otherwise we know that men will venture the utmost hazards for the satisfaction of their lusts; as he did afterwards. The Pharisees were in the very same state and condition, Matt. xxi. 26, they would fain have decried the ministry of John, but durst not, for fear of the people; and by the same argument were they deterred from killing our Saviour, ver. 46, who had highly provoked them by a parable, setting out their deserved and approaching destruction. They durst not do it for fear of a tumult among the people, seeing they looked on him as a prophet. Thus God overawes the hearts of innumerable persons in the world every day, and causes them to desist from attempting to bring forth the sins which they had conceived. Difficulties they shall be sure to meet with; yea, it is likely, if they should attempt it, it would prove impossible for them to accomplish. We owe much of our quiet in this world, to the efficacy given to this

consideration in the hearts of men by the Holy Ghost: Adulteries, rapines, murders, are obviated and stifled by it. Men would engage in them daily, but that they judge it impossible for them to fulfil what they aim at.

Secondly: God does it by an argument taken from the inconveniences, evils, and troubles that will befall men in the pursuit of sin. If they follow it, this or that inconvenience will ensue; this trouble, this evil, temporal or eternal. And this argument, as managed by the Spirit of God, is the great engine in his hand, whereby he casts up banks, and gives bounds to the lusts of men, that they break not out, to the confusion of all that order and beauty which yet remains in the works of his hands. Paul gives us the general import of this argument: "For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bear witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another." Rom. ii. 14, 15. If any men in the world may be thought to be given up to pursue and fulfil all the sins that their lusts can conceive, it is those that have not the law, to whom the written law of God does not denounce the evil that attends it. But though they have it not, says the apostle, they show forth the work of it, they do many things which it requires, and forbear, or abstain from many things that it forbids, and so show forth its work and efficacy. But whence is it that they do so? Why their thoughts accuse or excuse them. It is from the consideration and arguings that they have within themselves about sin, and its conse-

quences, which prevail upon them to abstain from many things that their hearts would carry them out to. For conscience is a man's prejudging of himself, with respect to the future judgment of God. Thus Felix was staggered in his pursuit of sin, when he trembled at Paul's preaching of righteousness and judgment to come. Acts xxiv. 25. So Job tells us, that the consideration of punishment from God, has a strong influence on the minds of men, to keep them from sin. Job xxxi. 1—3. How the Lord makes use of that consideration, even towards his own, when they have broken the cords of his love, and cast off the rule of his grace for a season, I have before declared.

Thirdly: God does this same work by making effectual an argument from the unprofitableness of the things that men are engaged in. By this were the brethren of Joseph stayed from slaying him: "What profit is it," say they, "if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?" Gen. xxxvii. 26, 27, we shall get nothing by it, it will bring in no advantage or satisfaction to us. And the heads of this way of God's obstructing conceived sin, or the springs of these kinds of arguments, are so many and various that it is impossible to insist particularly upon them. There is nothing present, or to come, nothing belonging to this life, or another, nothing desirable or undesirable, nothing good or evil, but at one time or another, an argument may be taken from it for the obstruction of sin.

Fourthly: God accomplishes this work by arguments taken from what is good and honest, what is comely, praiseworthy, and acceptable to himself. This is the great road wherein he walks with his saints under their temptations, or in their

conceptions of sin. He recovers effectually upon their minds a consideration of all those springs and motives to obedience, which are discovered and proposed in the gospel; some at one time, some at another. He minds them of his own love, mercy, and kindness; his eternal love, with the fruits of it, whereof themselves have been made partakers. He minds them of the blood of his Son, his cross, sufferings, tremendous undertaking in the work of mediation, and the concernment of his heart, love, honour, name, in their obedience. He minds them of the love of the Spirit, with all his consolations which they have been made partakers of, and privileges wherewith, by him, they have been intrusted. He minds them of the gospel, the glory and beauty of it as revealed to their souls. He minds them of the excellency and comeliness of obedience, of their performance of that duty they owe to God, that peace, quietness, and serenity of mind, that they have enjoyed therein. On the other side, he minds them of being a provocation by sin to the eyes of his glory, saying in their hearts: "Do not that abominable thing which my soul hateth." He minds them of their wounding their Lord Christ, and putting him to shame; of their grieving the Holy Spirit, whereby they are sealed to the day of redemption; of their defiling his dwelling-place. He minds them of the reproach, dishonours, scandal which they bring on the gospel, and the profession thereof. He minds them of the terrors, darkness, wounds, want of peace, that they may bring upon their own souls. From these and like considerations, does God put a stop to the progress of the law of sin in the heart, that it shall not go on to bring forth the evil which it has conceived. I could give instances in arguments of all these several

kinds, recorded in the Scripture, but it would be too long a work for us, who are now engaged in a design of another nature. But one or two examples may be mentioned. Joseph resists his first temptation on one of these accounts: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. The evil of sinning against God, his God, that consideration alone detains him from the least inclination to his temptation. It is sin against God, to whom I owe all obedience; the God of my life, and of all my mercies: I will not do it. The argument wherewith Abigail prevailed on David to withhold him from self-revenge and murder, was of the same nature, and he acknowledges that it was from the Lord. 1 Sam. xxv. 31, 32. I shall add no more, for all the scripture motives which we have to duty, made effectual by grace, are instances of this way of God's procedure.

Sometimes, I confess, God secretly works the hearts of men, by his own finger, without the use and means of such arguments as those insisted on, to stop the progress of sin. So he tells Abimelech, "I have withheld thee from sinning against me." Gen. xx. 6. Now this could not be done by any of the arguments which we have insisted on, because Abimelech knew not that the thing which he intended was sin; and therefore he pleads, that in the "integrity of his heart and innocency of his hands he did it," ver. 5. God turned about his will and thoughts, that he should not accomplish his intention; but by what ways or means is not revealed. Nor is it evident what course he took in the change of Esau's heart, when he came out against his brother to destroy him, Gen. xxxiii. 4. Whether he stirred up in him a fresh spring of natural affections, or caused him to consider what grief,

by this means, he should bring to his aged father, who loved him so tenderly; or whether, being now grown great and wealthy, he more and more despised the matter of difference between him and his brother, and so utterly slighted it, is not known. It may be, God did it by an immediate powerful act of his Spirit upon his heart, without the actual intervention of any of these or the like considerations. Now, though the things mentioned are in themselves, at other times, feeble and weak, yet when they are managed by the Spirit of God to such an end and purpose, they certainly become effectual, and are the matter of his preventing grace.

First: God prevents the bringing forth of conceived sin by real spiritual saving grace; and that either in the first conversion of sinners, or in the following supplies of it. This is one part of the mystery of his grace and love. He meets men sometimes in their highest resolutions for sin, with the highest efficacy of his grace. Hereby he manifests the power of his own grace, and gives the soul a further experience of the law of sin, when it takes such a farewell of it, as to be changed in the midst of its resolutions to serve the lusts thereof. By this he melts down the lusts of men, causes them to wither at the root, that they shall no more strive to bring forth what they have conceived, but be filled with shame and sorrow at their conception. An example and instance of this proceeding of God, for the use and instruction of all generations, we have in Paul. His heart was full of wickedness, blasphemy, and persecution; his conception of them was come to rage and madness, and a full purpose of exercising them all to the utmost; so the story relates it, Acts ix.; so himself declares the

state to have been with him. Acts xxvi. 9—12; 1 Tim. i. 13. In the midst of all this violent pursuit of sin, a voice from Heaven shuts up the womb, and dries the breasts of it, and he cries, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. The same person seems to intimate, that this is the way of God's procedure with others, even to meet them with his converting grace, in the height of their sin and folly. For he himself, he says, was a pattern of God's dealing with others; as he dealt with him, so also would he do with some such like sinners. "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, as a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." 1 Tim. i. 16. And we have not a few examples of it in our own days. Sundry persons on set purpose, going to this or that place, to deride and scoff at the dispensation of the word, have been met with in the very place wherein they designed to serve their lusts and Satan, and have been cast down at the foot of God. This way of God's dealing with sinners is at large set forth in Job xxxiii. 15—18. Dionysius the Areopagite is another instance of this work of God's grace and love. Paul is dragged either by him, or before him, to plead for his life, as a setter forth of strange gods, which at Athens was death by the law. In the midst of this frame of spirit God meets with him by converting grace; sin withers in the womb, and he cleaves to Paul and his doctrine. Acts xvii. 18—34. The like dispensation towards Israel, we have, Hosea xi. 7—10. But there is no need to insist on more instances of this observation. God is pleased to leave no generation unconvinced of this truth, if they do but attend to their own experiences, and the examples of this work of

his mercy amongst them. Every day, one or other is taken in the fulness of the purpose of his heart to go on in sin, in this or that sin, and is stopped in his course by the power of converting grace.

Secondly: God does it by the same grace in the renewed communications of it, that is, by special assisting grace. That is the common way of his dealing with believers in this case. That they also through the deceitfulness of sin, may be carried on to the conceiving of this or that sin, was before declared. God puts a stop to their progress, or rather to the prevalency of the law of sin in them, and that by giving in to them special assistances, needful for their preservation and deliverance. As David says of himself, "His feet were almost gone, his steps had well nigh slipped," Psal. lxxiii. 2; he was at the brink of unbelieving despairing thoughts, and conclusions about God's providence in the government of the world; from whence he was recovered, as he afterwards declares. So is it with many a believer; he is oftentimes at the very brink, at the very door of some folly or iniquity, when God puts in, by the efficacy of actually assisting grace, and recovers him to an obediential frame of heart again. And this is a peculiar work of Christ, wherein he manifests and exerts his faithfulness towards his own: "He is able to succour them that are tempted." Heb. ii. 18. It is not an absolute power, but a power clothed with mercy, that is intended; such a power as is put forth from a sense of the suffering of poor believers, under their temptations. And how does he exercise this merciful ability towards us? He gives forth, and we find in him "grace to help in a time of need," Heb. iv. 16; seasonable help and assistance for our deliverance, when we are ready to be overpowered by

sin and temptation. When lust has conceived, and is ready to bring forth, when the soul lies at the brink of some iniquity, he gives it seasonable help, relief, deliverance, and safety. Here lies a great part of the care and faithfulness of Christ towards his poor saints; he will not suffer them to be worried with the power of sin, nor to be carried out to ways that shall dishonour the gospel, or fill them with shame and reproach, and so render them useless in the world; but he steps in with the saving relief and assistance of his grace, stops the course of sin, and makes them in himself "more than conquerors." And this assistance lies under the promise, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will, with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." 1 Cor. x. 13. Temptation shall try us; it is for our good: many holy ends does the Lord compass and bring about by it. But when we are tried to the utmost of our ability, so that one assault more would overbear us, a way of escape is provided. And as this may be done several ways, as I have elsewhere declared, so this we are now upon is one of the most eminent, namely, by supplies of grace, to enable the soul to bear up, resist, and conquer. And when once God begins to deal in this way of love with a soul, he will not cease to add one supply after another, until the whole work of his grace and faithfulness be accomplished. An example hereof we have, Isa. lvii. 17, 18; poor sinners there are so far captivated to the power of their lusts, that the first and second dealings of God with them are not effectual for their delivery; but he will not give them over; he is in

the pursuit of a design of love towards them, and so ceases not until they are recovered. These are the general heads of the second way whereby God hinders the bringing forth of conceived sin, namely, by working on the will of the sinner. He does it either by common convictions, or special grace, so that of their own accord, they shall let go the purpose and will of sinning that they are risen up to. And this is no mean way of his providing for his own glory, and the honour of his gospel in the world, whose professors would stain the whole beauty of it, were they left to themselves, to bring forth all the evil that is conceived in their hearts.

Besides these general ways, there is one yet more special, that at once works both upon the power and will of the sinner; and this is the way of afflictions, concerning which, one word shall close this discourse. Afflictions, I say, work by both these ways, in reference to conceived sin. They work providentially on the power of the creature. When a man has conceived a sin, and is in full purpose of the pursuit of it, God oftentimes sends a sickness, and abates his strength, or a loss cuts him short in his plenty, and so takes him off from the pursuit of his lusts, though it may be, his heart is not weaned from them. His power is weakened, and he cannot do the evil that he would. In this sense it belongs to the first way of God's obviating the production of sin. Great afflictions work sometimes, not from their own nature immediately and directly, but from the gracious purpose and intention of him that sends them. He insinuates into the dispensation of them, that of grace and power, of love and kindness, which shall effectually take off the heart and mind from sin. "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have

I learned thy commandments." Psalm cxix. 67. And in this way, because of the predominancy of renewing and assisting grace, they belong to the latter means of preventing sin.

And these are some of the ways whereby it pleases God to put a stop to the progress of sin, both in believers and unbelievers, which at present we shall instance in; and if we would endeavour further to search out his ways to perfection, yet we must still conclude that it is but a "little portion which we know of him."

CHAPTER XIV.

The power of Sin further demonstrated by the effects it has had in the lives of professors—First, In actual Sins. Secondly, In habitual declensions.

We now are to proceed to other evidences of that sad truth which we are in the demonstration of. But the main of our work being past through, I shall be more brief in the management of the arguments that remain.

That, then, which in the next place may be fixed upon, is the demonstration which this law of sin has in all ages, given of its power and efficacy, by the woful fruits that it has brought forth, even in believers themselves. Now these are of two sorts. First, The great actual eruptions of sin in their lives. Secondly, Their habitual declensions from the frames, state, and condition of obedience, and communion with God, which they had obtained; both which, by the rules of James before unfolded, are to be laid to the account of this law of sin, and

belong to the fourth head of its progress, and are both of them convincing evidences of its power and efficacy.

First: Consider the fearful eruptions of actual sins that have been in the lives of believers, and we shall find our position evidenced. Should I go through at large with this consideration, I must recount all the sad and scandalous failings of the saints that are left on record in the Holy Scripture. But the particulars of them are known to all; so that I shall not need to mention them, nor the many aggravations that in their circumstances they are attended with: only some few things tending to the rendering of our present consideration of them useful, may be remarked. As,

First: They are, most of them, in the lives of men that were not of the lowest form, or ordinary sort of believers, but of men that had a peculiar eminency in them, on the account of their walking with God in their generations. Such were Noah, Lot, David, Hezekiah, and others. They were not men of an ordinary size, but higher than their brethren by the shoulders and upwards in profession, yea, in real holiness. And surely that must needs be of a mighty efficacy, that could hurry such giants in the ways of God into such abominable sins as they fell into. An ordinary engine could never have turned them out of the course of their obedience. It was a poison that no athletic constitution of spiritual health, no antidote could withstand.

Secondly: And these very men, fell not into their great sins at the beginning of their profession, when they had had but little experience of the goodness of God, of the sweetness and pleasantness of obedience, of the power and craft of sin, of

its impulsions, solicitations, and surprisals, but after a long course of walking with God, and acquaintance with all these things, together with innumerable motives to watchfulness. Noah, according to the lives of men, in those days of the world, had walked uprightly with God some hundreds of years, before he was so surprised as he was. Righteous Lot seems to have been towards the end of his days, before he defiled himself with the abominations recorded. David, in a short life, had as much experience of grace and sin, and as much close spiritual communion with God as ever had any of the sons of men, before he was cast to the ground by this law of sin. So was it with Hezekiah, in his degree, which was none of the meanest. Now to set upon such persons, so well acquainted with its power and deceit, so armed and provided against it, that had been conquerors over it for so many years, and to prevail against them, argues a power and efficacy, too mighty for every thing but the Spirit of the Almighty to withstand. Who can look to have a greater stock of inherent grace than those men had? To have more experience of God and the excellency of his ways, the sweetness of his love, and of communion with him than they had? Who has either better furniture to oppose sin withal, or more obligations so to do than they? And yet we see how fearfully they were prevailed against.

Thirdly: As if God had permitted their falls on set purpose, that we might learn to be wary of this powerful enemy, they all of them fell out when they had newly received great and stupendous mercies from the hand of God, that ought to have been strong obligations to diligence and watchfulness in close obedience. Noah was but newly

come forth of that world of waters, wherein he saw the ungodly world perishing for their sins, and himself preserved by that astonishing miracle which all ages must admire. Whilst the world's desolation was an hourly remembrancer to him of his strange preservation by the immediate care and hand of God, he falls into drunkenness. Lot had newly seen that, at which every one that thinks on cannot but tremble. He saw, as one speaks, hell coming out of heaven upon unclean sinners, the greatest evidence, except the cross of Christ, that God ever gave in his providence, of the judgment to come. He saw himself and children delivered, by the special care and miraculous hand of God; and yet, whilst these strange mercies were fresh upon him he fell into drunkenness and incest. David was delivered out of all his troubles, and had the necks of his enemies given him round about, and he makes use of his peace, from a world of trials and troubles, to contrive murder and adultery. Immediately, it was, after Hezekiah's great and miraculous deliverance, that he falls into his carnal pride and boasting. I say, their falls, in such seasons, seem to be permitted on set purpose, to instruct us all in the truth that we have in hand; so that no persons, with what furniture of grace soever, can promise themselves security from its prevalency any other ways, than by keeping close constantly to him, who has supplies to give out, that are above its reach and efficacy. Methinks this should make us look about us. Are we better than Noah, who had that testimony from God, that he was a "perfect man in his generation, and walked with God?" Are we better than Lot, whose "righteous soul was vexed with the evil deeds" of ungodly men, for which he is commended

by the Holy Ghost? Are we more holy, wise, and watchful than David, who obtained this testimony, that he was "a man after God's own heart?" Or, better than Hezekiah, who appealed to God himself, that he had served him "uprightly with a perfect heart?" And yet, what prevalency this law of sin wrought in and over them, we see. And there is no end of the like examples. They are all set up as buoys to discover to us the sands, the shelves, the rocks, whereupon they made their shipwreck, to their hazard, danger, loss, yea, and would have done to their ruin, had not God been pleased, in his faithfulness, graciously to prevent it. And this is the first part of this evidence of the power of sin from its effects.

In the second part, it manifests its power in the habitual declensions from zeal and holiness, from the frames, state, and condition of obedience, and communion with God, whereunto they had attained, which are found in many believers. Promises of growth and improvement are many, and precious: the means excellent and effectual; the benefits great and unspeakable: yet it often falls out, that instead hereof, decays and declensions are found upon professors, yea, in and upon many of the saints of God. Now, whereas this must needs principally and chiefly be from the strength and efficacy of indwelling sin, and is therefore a great evidence thereof; I shall first evince the observation itself to be true; namely, That some of the saints themselves, do oftentimes so decline from that growth and improvement in faith, grace, and holiness, which might justly be expected from them; and then show, that the cause of this evil lies in that which we are treating of: and that it is the cause of total apostasy in unsound professors, shall

be afterwards declared. But this is a greater work which we have in hand. The prevailing upon true believers, unto a sinful declension, and gradual apostasy, requires a putting forth of more strength and efficacy than the prevailing upon unsound professors unto total apostasy. As the wind which will blow down a dead tree that has no root, to the ground, will scarcely shake or bow a living well-rooted tree. But this it will do. There is mention made in the Scripture of the first ways of David, and they are commended above his latter. 2 Chron. xvii. 3. The last ways, even of David, were tainted with the power of indwelling sin. Though we have mention only of the actual eruption of sin, yet that uncleanness, and pride, which were working in him in his numbering of the people, were certainly rooted in a declension from his first frame. Those rushes did not grow without mire. David would not have done so in his younger days, when he followed God in the wilderness of temptations and trials, full of faith, love, humility, brokenness of heart, zeal, tender affection to all the ordinances of God, all which were eminent in him. But his strength is impaired by the efficacy and deceitfulness of sin; his locks cut, and he becomes a prey to vile lusts and temptations. We have a notable instance in most of the churches, that our Saviour awakens to the consideration of their condition, in the Revelation: we may single out one of them: many good things there were in the church of Ephesus, for which it is greatly commended, Rev. ii. 2, 3; but yet it is charged with a decay, a declension, a gradual falling off and apostasy: "Thou hast left thy first love; remember, therefore, whence thou art fallen, and do thy first works," verses 4, 5. There was a decay, both in-

ward in the frame of heart, as to faith and love, and outward, as to obedience and works, in comparison of what they had formerly by the testimony of Christ himself. The same also might be shown concerning the rest of those churches, only one or two of them excepted. Five of them are charged with decays and declensions. Hence, there is mention in the Scripture, of the "kindness of youth," of the "love of espousals," with great commendation, Jer. ii. 2, 3; of our "first faith," 1 Tim. v. 12; of the "beginning of our confidence," Heb. iii. 14. And cautions are given that "we lose not the things that we have wrought." 2 John 8. But what need we to look back or search for instances to confirm the truth of this observation? An habitual declension from first engagements to God, from first attainments of communion with God, from first strictness in duties and obedience, is ordinary and common among professors. Might we, to this purpose take a general view of the professors in these nations, among whom the lot of the best of us will be found, in part or in whole, in somewhat or in all, to fall, we might be plentifully convinced of the truth of this observation. Is their zeal for God as warm, lively, vigorous, effectual, solicitous, as it was in their first giving themselves to God? Or, rather, is there not a common, slight, selfish frame of spirit come in the room of it upon most professors? Iniquity has abounded, and their love has waxed cold. Was it not of old a burden to their spirits to hear the name, and ways, and worship of God blasphemed and profaned? Could they not have said, with the Psalmist, "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law?" Psalm cxix. 136. Were not their souls solicitous about the interest of Christ in the world,

like Eli's about the ark? Did they not contend earnestly for the "truth once delivered to the saints," and every parcel of it, so wherein the grace of God, and the glory of the gospel were especially concerned? Did they not labour to judge and condemn the world by a holy and separate conversation? And do now the generality of professors abide in this frame? Have they grown and made improvement in it? Or is there not a coldness and indifferency grown upon the spirits of many in this thing? Yea, do not many despise all these things, and look upon their own former zeal as folly? May we not see many who have formerly been in esteem in ways of profession, become daily a scorn and reproach, through their miscarriages, and that justly, to the men of the world? Is it not with them as it was of old with the daughters of Zion, Isa. iii. 24, when God judged them for their sins and wantonness? Has not the world, and self, utterly ruined their profession? and are they not regardless of the things wherein they have formerly declared a singular concernment? Yea, are not some come, partly on one pretence, partly on another, to an open enmity to, and hatred of, the ways of God? They please them no more, but are evil in their eyes. But, not to mention such open apostates any further, whose hypocrisy the Lord Jesus Christ will shortly judge, how is it with the best? Are not almost all men grown cold and slack as to these things? Are they not less concerned in them than formerly? Are they not grown weary, selfish in their religion, and if things be tolerably well at home, scarce care how they go abroad in the world? at least, do they not prefer their ease, credit, safety, secular advantages, before these things? A frame that Christ abhors, and declares,

that those in whom it is found are none of his. Some, indeed, seem to retain a good zeal for truth; but wherein they make the fairest appearance, therein will they be found to be the most abominable. They cry out against errors, not for truth, but for party and interest's sake. Let a man be on their party, and promote their interest, be he ever so corrupt in his judgment, he is embraced, and it may be, admired. This is not zeal for God, but for a man's self. It is not "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;" but, "Master, forbid them, because they follow not with us." Better it were, doubtless, for men never to pretend to any zeal at all, than to substitute such wrathful selfishness in the room of it.

Secondly: Is men's delight in the ordinances and worship of God, the same as in former days? Do they find the same sweetness and relish in them as they have done of old? How precious has the Word been to them formerly? What joy and delight have they had in attendance thereon? How would they have run and gone to have been made partakers of it where it was dispensed in its power and purity, in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit? Did they not call the Sabbath their delight, and was not the approach of it a real joy unto their souls? Did they not long after the converse and communion of saints? And could they not undergo manifold perils for the attainment of it? And does this frame still abide upon them? Are there not decays and declensions to be found amongst them? May it not be said, "Gray hairs are here and there upon them, and they perceive it not?" Yea, are not men ready to say with them of old, "What a weariness is it?" Mal. i. 13. It is even a burden and a weariness to be tied up to

the observation of all these ordinances. What need we be at all so strict in the observation of the Sabbath? What need we hear so often? What need of this distinction in hearing? Insensibly a great disrespect, yea, even a contempt, of the pleasant and excellent ways of Christ and his gospel is fallen upon many professors.

Thirdly: May not the same conviction be further carried on, by an inquiry into the universal course of obedience, and the performance of duties that men have been engaged in? Is there the same conscientious tenderness of sinning abiding in many as was in days of old? the same exact performance of private duties? the same love to the brethren? the same readiness for the cross? the same humility of mind and spirit? the same self-denial? The steam of men's lusts, wherewith the air is tainted, will not suffer us so to say.

We need then go no further than this wretched generation wherein we live, to evince the truth of the observation laid down, as the foundation of the instance insisted on. The Lord give repentance before it be too late.

Now all these declensions, all these decays that are found in some professors, all proceed from this root and cause; they are all the product of indwelling sin, and all evince the exceeding power and efficacy of it. For the proof whereof I shall not need to go further than the general rule, which, out of James, we have already considered; namely, that lust, or indwelling sin is the cause of all actual sin, and all habitual declensions in believers. This is that which the apostle intends, in that place, to teach and declare. I shall therefore handle these two things, and show, First, That this does evince a great efficacy and power in sin. Secondly, De

clare the ways and means whereby it brings forth, or brings about this cursed effect; all in design of our general end, in calling upon and cautioning believers to avoid it, to oppose it.

First: It appears to be a work of great power and efficacy, from the provision that is made against it, which it prevails over. There is, in the covenant of grace, plentiful provision made, not only for the preventing of declensions and decay in believers, but also for their continual carrying on towards perfection. As,

First: The word itself, and all the ordinances of the gospel, are appointed and given unto us for this end. Ephes. iv. 11—15. That which is the end of giving gospel officers to the church, is the end also of giving all the ordinances to be administered by them. For they are given for "the work of the ministry," that is, for the administration of the ordinances of the gospel. Now what is, or what are these ends? They are all for the preventing of decays and declensions in the saints, all for the carrying them on to perfection, ver. 12. In general it is for "the perfecting of the saints," carrying on the work of grace in them, and the work of holiness and obedience by them: or, "for the edifying of the body of Christ;" their building up in an increase of faith and love even of every true member of the mystical body. But how far are they appointed thus to carry them on, thus to build them up? Has it bounds fixed to its work? Does it carry them so far, and then leave them? No, saith the apostle, Ephes. iv. 13. The dispensation of the word of the gospel, and the ordinances thereof, is designed for our help, assistance, and furtherance, until the whole work of faith and obedience is consummated. It is appointed to perfect and complete

that faith, knowledge, and growth in grace and holiness which is allotted to us in this world. But what if oppositions and temptations do lie in the way, Satan and his instruments working with great subtlety and deceit? Why, these ordinances are designed for our safe-guarding and deliverance from all their attempts and assaults, ver. 14, that so, being preserved in the use of them, or "speaking the truth in love, we may grow up unto him in all things who is the head, even Christ Jesus." This is, in general, the use of all gospel ordinances, the chief and main end for which they are appointed and given by God; namely, to preserve believers from all decays of faith and obedience, and to carry them on still towards perfection. These are means which God, the good husbandman, makes use of, to cause the vine to thrive, and bring forth fruit. And I could also manifest the same to be the special end of them distinctly. Briefly, the word is milk and strong meat, for the nourishing and strengthening of all sorts, and all degrees of believers. It has both seed and water in it, and manuring with it, to make them fruitful. The ordinance of the supper is appointed on purpose for the strengthening of our faith, in the remembrance of the death of the Lord, and the exercise of love one towards another. The communion of saints is for the edifying each other in faith, love, and obedience.

Secondly: There is that which adds weight to this consideration. God suffers us not to be unmindful of this assistance he has afforded us, but is continually calling upon us to make use of the means appointed for the attaining of the end proposed. He shows them to us, as the angel showed the water-spring to Hagar. Commands, exhorta-

tions, promises, threatenings, are multiplied to this purpose; see them summed up, Heb. ii. 1. He is continually saying to us, Why will you die? Why will you wither and decay? Come to the pastures prepared for you, and your souls shall live. If we see a lamb run from the fold into the wilderness, we wonder not if it be torn and rent of wild beasts: if we see a sheep leaving its green pastures and water-courses, to abide in dry barren heaths, we count it no marvel, nor inquire further, if we see him lean, and ready to perish. But if we find lambs wounded in the fold, we wonder at the boldness and rage of the beasts of prey, that durst set upon them there. If we see sheep pining in full pastures, we judge them to be diseased and unsound. It is indeed no marvel that poor creatures, who forsake their own mercies, and run away from the pasture and fold of Christ in his ordinances, are rent and torn with divers lusts, and do pine away with hunger and famine. But to see men living under, and enjoying all the means of spiritual thriving, yet to decay, not to be fat and flourishing, but rather daily to pine and wither, this argues some secret powerful distemper, whose poisonous and noxious qualities hinder the virtue and efficacy of the means they enjoy. This is indwelling sin. So wonderfully powerful, so effectually poisonous is it, that it can bring leanness on the souls of men, in the midst of all precious means of growth and flourishing. It may well make us tremble, to see men living under, and in the use of the means of the gospel, preaching, praying, administration of sacraments, and yet grow colder every day than other, in zeal for God; more selfish and worldly, even habitually to decline, as to the degrees of holiness which they had attained to.

Thirdly: Together with the dispensation of the outward means of spiritual growth or improvement, there are also supplies of grace continually afforded the saints from their Head, Christ Jesus. He is the head of all the saints. And he is a living head, and so a living head, as that he tells us, that "because he liveth, we shall live also." John xiv. 19. He communicates spiritual life to all that are his. In him is the fountain of our life, which is therefore said to be "hid with him in God." Col. iii. 3. And this life he gives to his saints, by quickening them by his Spirit. Rom. viii. 11. And he continues it to them, by the supplies of living grace, which he communicates to them. From these two, his quickening us, and continually giving out supplies of life to us, he is said to live in us: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Gal. ii. 20. The spiritual life which I have is not mine own, not from myself was it educed, not by myself is it maintained, but it is merely and solely the work of Christ; so that it is not I that live, but, he lives in me, the whole of my life being from him alone. Neither does this living head communicate only a bare life to believers, that they should merely live, and no more, a poor, weak, dying life, as it were, but he gives out sufficiently to afford them a strong, vigorous, thriving, flourishing life. He comes, not only that his sheep may have life, but that "they may have it more abundantly." John x. 10; that is, in a plentiful manner, so as that they may flourish, be fat and fruitful. Thus it is with the whole body of Christ, and every member thereof, "whereby it grows up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted, by that which every joint supplieth, according to

the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." Ephes. iv. 15, 16. The end of all communications of grace, and supplies of life from this living head, is the increase of the whole body, and every member of it, and the edifying of itself in love. His treasures of grace are unsearchable, his stores inexhaustible. His life, the fountain of ours, full and eternal; his heart bounteous and large, his hand open and liberal; so that there is no doubt but that he communicates supplies of grace, for their increase in holiness, abundantly to all his saints. Whence, then, is it that they do not all flourish and thrive exceedingly? As you may see it oftentimes in a natural body, so it is here. Though the seat and rise of the blood and spirits in the head and heart be exceedingly good and sound, yet there may be a withering member in the body; something intercepts the influences of life to it. So that though the heart and head perform their office, in giving supplies no less to that, than they do to any other member; yet all the effect produced, is merely to keep it from utterly perishing; it grows weak and decays every day. The withering and decaying of any member in Christ's mystical body, is not for want of his communication of grace for an abundant life, but from the powerful interception that is made of the efficacy of it, by the interposition and opposition of indwelling sin. Hence it is that where lust grows strong, a great deal of grace will but keep the soul alive, and not give it any eminency in fruitfulness at all. Oftentimes Christ gives very much grace, where not many of its effects appear. It spends its strength and power, in withstanding the continual assaults of violent corruptions and lusts, so that it

cannot put forth its proper virtue towards further fruitfulness. As a valuable medicine that is fit to check vicious and noxious humours, and to comfort, refresh, and strengthen nature; if the evil humour be strong and greatly prevailing, spends its whole strength and virtue in the subduing and correcting of it, contributing much less to the relief of nature than it otherwise would do, if it met not with such oppositions: so it is with the eye-salve, and the healing grace, which we have abundantly from the wings of the Sun of Righteousness. It is forced, oftentimes, to put forth its virtue to oppose and contend against, and in any measure subdue prevailing lusts and corruptions: that the soul receives not that strengthening to duties and fruitfulness which otherwise it might receive by it, is from hence. How sound, healthy, and flourishing, how fruitful and exemplary in holiness, might many a soul be, by and with that grace, which is continually communicated to it from Christ, which now, by reason of the power of indwelling sin, is only not dead, but weak, withering, and useless. And, this, if any thing, is a notable evidence of the efficacy of indwelling sin, that it is able to give such a stop, and check to the mighty and effectual power of grace, so that notwithstanding the blessed and continual supplies that we receive from our head, yet many believers do decline and decay, and that habitually, as to what they had attained to; their last ways not answering their first. This makes the vineyard in the very fruitful hill to bring forth so many wild grapes. This makes so many trees barren in fertile fields.

Fourthly: Besides the continual supplies of grace that constantly, according to the tenor of the covenant, are communicated to believers, which

keep them that they thirst no more, as to a total indigence: there is, moreover, a readiness in the Lord Christ, to yield peculiar succour to the souls of his, according as their occasions shall require. The apostle tells us, that he is "a merciful high priest, and able, (that is, ready, prepared and willing) to succour them that are tempted." Heb. ii. 18. And we are, on that account, invited to "come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;" that is, grace sufficient, seasonable, suitable to any special trial or temptation that we may be exercised with. Our merciful high priest is ready to give out this especial seasonable grace, over and above those constant communications of supplies of the Spirit, which we mentioned before. Besides the never failing springs of ordinary covenant grace, he has also peculiar refreshing showers, for times of drought. And this is exceedingly to the advantage of the saints, for their preservation and growth in grace; and there may very many more of the like nature be added. But now I say, notwithstanding all these, and the residue of the like importance, such is the power and efficacy of indwelling sin, so great its deceitfulness and restlessness, so many its wiles and temptations, it often falls out that many of them, for whose growth and improvement all this provision is made, do yet as was shown, go back and decline, even as to their course of walking with God. Samson's strength fully evidenced itself, when he broke seven new withs and seven new cords, wherewith he was bound, as burning tow, and as thread. The noxious humour in the body, which is so stubborn, as that no use of the most sovereign remedies can prevail against it, ought to be regarded. Such is this indwelling sin,

if not watched over; it breaks all the cords made to bind it; it blunts the instruments appointed to root it up; it resists all healing medicines, though ever so sovereign; and is, therefore, assuredly of exceeding efficacy. Besides, believers have innumerable obligations upon them, from the love, the command of God, to "grow in grace," to press forward towards perfection, as they have abundant means provided for them so to do. Their doing so is a matter of the greatest advantage, profit, sweetness, contentment to them, in the world: it is the burden, the trouble of their souls, that they do not so do; that they are not more holy, more zealous, useful, fruitful; they desire it above life itself; they know it is their duty to watch against this enemy, to fight against it, to pray against it, and so they do. They more desire its destruction, than the enjoyment of all this world, and all that it can afford. And yet, notwithstanding all this, such is the subtlety, and fraud, and violence, and fury, and urgency, and importunity of this adversary, that it frequently prevails to bring them into the woful condition mentioned. Hence it is with believers sometimes, as it is with men in some places at sea: they have a good and fair gale of wind, it may be, all night long; they ply their tackling, attend diligently to their business, and, it may be, take great delight to consider how they proceed in their voyage: in the morning, or after a season, coming to measure what way they have made, and what progress they have had, they find that they are much backward of what they were, instead of getting one step forward; falling into a swift tide or current against them, it has frustrated all their labours, and rendered the wind in their sails almost useless; somewhat, thereby they have

borne up against the stream, but have made no progress. So it is with believers: they have a good gale of supplies from the Spirit above, they attend duties diligently, pray constantly, hear attentively, and omit nothing that may carry them on in their voyage towards eternity: but after a while, coming seriously to consider, by the examination of their hearts and ways, what progress they have made, they find that all their assistance and duties have not been able to bear them up against some strong tide or current of indwelling sin. It has kept them, indeed, that they have not been driven, and split on rocks and shelves: it has preserved them from gross, scandalous sins, but yet they have lost in their spiritual frame, or gone backwards, and are entangled under many woful decays; which is a notable evidence of the life of sin, about which we are treating. Now, because the end of our discovering this power of sin is, that we may be careful to obviate and prevent it, in its operation; and because, of all the effects it produces, there is none more dangerous or pernicious than that we have last insisted on; namely, that it prevails upon many professors, to an habitual declension from their former ways and attainments, notwithstanding all the sweetness and excellency which their souls have found in them; I shall, as was said, in the next place consider by what ways and means, and through what assistance, it usually prevails, in this kind, that we may the better be instructed to watch against it.

CHAPTER XV.

Decays in Degrees of Grace caused by Indwelling Sin—The Ways of its Prevalency to this Purpose.

The ways and means whereby indwelling sin prevails on believers to habitual declensions and decays, as to degrees of grace and holiness, is that which now comes under consideration, and are many.

First: Upon the first conversion and calling of sinners to God and Christ, they have usually many fresh springs breaking forth in their souls, and refreshing showers coming upon them, which bear them up to a high rate of faith, love, holiness, fruitfulness, and obedience. As upon a land-flood, when many lesser streams run into a river, it swells over its bounds, and rolls on with more than ordinary fulness. Now if these springs be not kept open, if they prevail not for the continuance of these showers, they must needs decay and go backwards. We shall name one or two of them.

First: They have a fresh, vigorous sense of pardoning mercy. According as this is in the soul, so will it love and delight in God, so will its obedience be. As, I say, is the sense of gospel-pardon, so will be the life of gospel-love. "I say unto thee," says our Saviour, of the poor woman, "her sins, which were many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Luke vii. 47. Her great love was an evidence of great forgiveness, and her great sense of it. For our Saviour is not rendering a

reason of her forgiveness, as though it were for her love, but of her love, that it was because of her forgiveness. Having in the foregoing parable, from verse 38, and onward, convinced the Pharisees, with whom he had to do, that he to whom most was forgiven would love most, as verse 43, he thence gives an account of the great love of the woman, springing from the sense she had of the great forgiveness which she had so freely received. Thus sinners, at their first conversion, are very sensible of great forgiveness: "Of whom I am chief," lies next their heart. This greatly subdues their hearts and spirits to all in God, and quickens them to all obedience; even that such poor cursed sinners as they were, should so freely be delivered and pardoned. The love of God and of Christ, in their forgiveness, highly conquers and constrains them to make it their business to live to God.

Secondly: The fresh taste they have had of spiritual things, keeps up such a savour and relish of them in their souls, as that worldly contentments, whereby men are drawn off from close walking with God, are rendered sapless and undesirable to them. Having tasted of the wine of the gospel, they desire no other, for they say, this is best. So was it with the apostles, upon that option offered them, as to a departure from Christ, upon the apostasy of many false professors: "Will ye go away also?" They answer, by Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." John vi. 67, 68. They had such a fresh savour and relish of the doctrine of the gospel, and the grace of Christ upon their souls, that they could entertain no thoughts of declining from it. As a man that has been long kept in a dungeon, if brought forth on a sudden into the light of the sun,

finds so much pleasure and contentment in it, in the beauties of the old creation, that he thinks he can never be weary of it, nor shall ever be contented, on any account, to be under darkness again. So it is with souls, when first translated into the marvellous light of Christ, to behold the beauties of the new creation. They see a new glory in him, that hath quite sullied the desirableness of all earthly diversions. And they see a new guilt and filth in sin, that gives them an utter abhorrency of its old delights and pleasures; and so of other things.

Now, whilst these and the like springs are kept open in the souls of converted sinners, they constrain them to a vigorous active holiness. They can never do enough for God; so that, oftentimes, their zeal, as saints, suffers them not to escape without some blots on their prudence, as men: as might be instanced in many of the martyrs of old.

This, then, is the first, at least one way, whereby indwelling sin prepares men for decays and declensions in grace and obedience; it endeavours to stop, or taint these springs. And there are several ways whereby it brings this to pass.

First: It works by sloth and negligence. It prevails in the soul, to a neglect of stirring up continual thoughts of, or about, the things that so powerfully influence it to strict and fruitful obedience. If care be not taken, if diligence and watchfulness be not used, and all means observed, which are appointed of God, to keep a quick and living sense of them upon the soul, they will dry up and decay, and consequently, that obedience that should spring from them, will do so also. Isaac digged wells, but the Philistines stopped them, and his flocks had no benefit by them. Let the heart ever so little disuse itself

to gracious, soul-affecting thoughts of the love of God, the cross of Christ, the greatness and excellency of gospel-mercy, the beauties of holiness; they will quickly be as much estranged to a man, as he can be to them. He that shuts his eyes, for a season, in the sun, when he opens them again, can see nothing at all. And, so much as a man loses of faith towards these things, so much will they lose of power towards him. They can do little or nothing upon him, because of his unbelief, which formerly were so exceedingly effectual towards him. So it was with the spouse in the Canticles, chap. v. 2; Christ calls to her, verse 1, with a marvellous loving and gracious invitation, to communion with himself. She, who had formerly been ravished at the first hearing of that joyful sound, being now under the power of sloth and carnal ease, returns a sorry excusing answer to his call, which ended in her own signal loss and sorrow. Indwelling sin, I say, prevailing by spiritual sloth upon the souls of men, to an inadverteney of the motions of God's Spirit, in their former apprehensions of divine love, and a negligence of stirring up continual thoughts of faith about it, a decay grows insensibly upon the whole soul. Thus God often complains, that his people had forgotten him, that is, grown unmindful of his love and grace, which was the beginning of their apostasy.

Secondly: By unframing the soul, so that it shall have formal, weary, powerless thoughts of those things which should prevail with it to diligence, in thankful obedience. The apostle cautions us, that in dealing with God, we should use "reverence and godly fear," Heb. xii. 28, 29, because of his purity, holiness, and majesty. And this is that which the Lord himself spake, in the destruction

of Nadab and Abihu. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me." Lev. x. 3. He will be dealt with in an awful, holy, reverent manner. So are we to deal with all the things of God, wherein, or whereby, we have communion with him. The soul is to have a great reverence of God in them. When men begin to take them into slight and common thoughts, not using and improving them to the utmost, for the end whereto they are appointed, they lose all their beauty, and glory, and power towards them. When we have any thing to do, wherein faith, or love towards God is to be exercised, we must do it with all our hearts, with all our minds, strength, and souls, not slightly and carelessly, which God abhors; he does not only require that we bear his love and grace in remembrance, but that, as much as in us lies, we do it according to the worth and excellency of them. It was the sin of Hezekiah, that he "rendered not again according to the benefits done to him." 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. So, whilst we consider gospel truths, the utmost endeavour of the soul ought to be, that we may be changed into the same image, or likeness, 2 Cor. iii. 18, that is, that they may have their full power and effect upon us. Otherwise James tells us what our "beholding the glory of the Lord in a glass," there mentioned by the apostle, that is, reading or hearing the mind of God in Christ, revealed in the gospel, comes to; "It is but like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass, for he beholdeth himself and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." James i. 23, 24. It makes no manner of impression upon him, begets no idea nor image of his likeness in his imagination, because he does it only slightly, and with a transient look

So it is with men that will indeed think of gospel truths, but in a slight manner, without endeavouring, with all their hearts, minds, and strength, to have them engrafted upon their souls, and all the effects of them produced in them. Now this is the way of sinners, in their first engagements to God. They never think of pardoning mercy, but they labour to affect their whole souls with it, and stir up themselves to suitable affections, and returns of constant obedience. They think not of the excellency of Christ, and spiritual things, now newly discovered to them in a saving light, but they press, with all their might, after a further and fuller enjoyment of them. This keeps them humble, and holy, this makes them thankful and fruitful. But now, if the utmost diligence and carefulness be not used, to improve and grow in this wisdom, to keep up this frame, indwelling sin, working by the vanity of the minds of men, will, insensibly, bring them to content themselves with slight and rare thoughts of these things, without a diligent, sedulous endeavour to give them their due improvement upon the soul. As men decay herein, so they will assuredly decay, and decline, in the power of holiness, and close walking with God. The springs being stopped, or tainted, the streams will not run so swiftly, at least not so sweetly, as formerly. Some, by this means, under an uninterrupted profession, insensibly wither almost into nothing. They talk of religion, and spiritual things, as much as ever they did in their lives, and perform duties with as much constancy, as ever they did, but yet have poor, lean, starving souls, as to any real and effectual communion with God. By the power and subtlety of indwelling sin, they have grown formal, and learned to deal about spiritual things in a careless manner, whereby they

have lost all their life, vigour, savour, and efficacy towards them. Be always serious in spiritual things, if ever you intend to be bettered by them.

Thirdly: Indwelling sin oftentimes prevails to the stopping of these springs of gospel obedience, by false and foolish opinions, corrupting the simplicity of the gospel. False opinions are the works of the flesh. From the vanity and darkness of the minds of men, with a mixture, more or less, of corrupt affections, do they mostly proceed. The apostle was jealous over his Corinthians in this matter; he was afraid, lest their minds should "by any means be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ," 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3, which he knew would be attended by a decay and declension in faith, love, and obedience. And thus matters, in this case, often fall out. We have seen some, who, after they have received a sweet taste of the love of God in Christ, of the excellency of pardoning mercy, and have walked humbly with God, for many years, in the faith and apprehension of the truth, have, by the corruptions of their minds from the simplicity that is in Christ, by false and foolish opinions, despised all their own experiences, and rejected all the efficacy of truth, as to the furtherance of their obedience. Hence John cautions the Elect Lady and her children, to take heed they were not seduced, "lest they should lose the things that they had wrought," 2 John 8; lest they should themselves cast away all their obedience as lost, and a thing of no value. We have innumerable instances hereof in the days wherein we live. How many are there who, not many years since, put an unspeakable value on the pardon of sin in the blood of Christ, who delighted in gospel discoveries of spiritual things, and walked in obe-

dience to God on the account of them ; who, being beguiled, and turned aside from the truth as it is in Jesus, do despise these springs of their own former obedience. And as this is done grossly and openly in some, so there are more secret and more plausible insinuations of corrupt opinions, tainting the springs and fountains of gospel obedience, and through the vanity of men's minds, which is a principal part of indwelling sin, getting ground upon them. Such are all those that tend to the extenuation of special grace, in its freedom and efficacy, and the advancement of the wills, or the endeavours of men, in their spiritual power and ability: they are all works of the flesh, and, however some may pretend a usefulness in them to the promotion of holiness, they will be found to taint the spring of true evangelical obedience, insensibly to turn the heart from God, and bring the whole soul into a spiritual decay.

And this is one way whereby indwelling sin produces this pernicious effect, of drawing men off from the power, purity, and fruitfulness attending their first conversion, and engagements to God, bringing them into habitual declension, at least as to degrees, of their holiness and grace. There is not any thing we ought to be more watchful against, if we intend effectually to deal with this powerful and subtle enemy. It is no small part of the wisdom of faith, to observe whatever gospel truths continue to have the same savour unto, and efficacy upon the soul, as formerly they have had ; and whether an endeavour be maintained to improve them continually as at the first. A commandment that is always practised is always new, as John speaks of that of love. And he that really improves gospel truths, though he hears them a thou-

sand times, they will be always new and fresh to him, because they put on newness of practice. When to another that grows common under them, they are burdensome and common to him: and he even loathes the manna that he is so accustomed to.

Secondly: Indwelling sin does this, by taking men off from their watch against the returns of Satan. When the Lord Christ comes first to take possession of any soul for himself, he binds that strong man and spoils his goods: he deprives him of all his power, dominion, and interest. Satan being thus dispossessed and frustrated in his hopes and expectations, leaves the soul, as finding it newly mortified to his baits. So he left our Saviour upon his first fruitless attempts. But it is said, "He left him only for a season." Luke iv. 13. He intended to return again, as he should see his advantage. So it is with believers also.—Being cast out from his interest in them, he leaves them for a season, at least comparatively he does so. Freed from his assaults and perplexing temptations, they proceed vigorously in the course of their obedience, and so flourish in the ways of God. But this holds not; Satan returns again, and if the soul stands not continually upon its guard against him, he will quickly get such advantages as shall put a notable interruption upon his fruitfulness and obedience. Hence some, after they have spent some time, it may be some years, in cheerful exemplary walking with God, have, upon Satan's return, consumed all their latter days in wrestling with perplexing temptations, wherewith he has entangled them. Others have plainly fallen under the power of his assaults. It is like a man, who having for a while lived usefully amongst his neighbours, done good, and communicated according to his ability,

distributing to the poor, and helping all round about him, at length falling into the hands of vexatious wrangling, oppressive men, is forced to spend his whole time and revenue in defending himself against them at law, and so becomes useless in the place where he lives. So it is with many a believer; after he has walked in a fruitful course of obedience to the glory of God, and edification of the church of Christ, being afresh set upon by the return of Satan in one way or other he has enough to do all the remainder of his life to keep himself alive; in the mean time, as to many graces, wofully decaying and going backward. Now this also, though Satan has a hand in it, is from indwelling sin: I mean, the success is so which Satan does obtain in his undertaking. This encourages him, makes way for his return, and gives entrance to his temptations. You know how it is with them, out of whom he is cast only by gospel conviction; after he has wandered and waited awhile, he says, he will return to his house from whence he was ejected. And what is the issue? Carnal lusts have prevailed over the man's convictions, and made his soul fit to entertain returning devils. It is so as to the measure of prevalency, that Satan obtains against believers, upon advantages administered to him, by sin's disposing the soul to an obnoxiousness to his temptations.

Now the way and means whereby indwelling sin does give advantage to Satan for his return, are all those which dispose them towards a declension which shall afterwards be mentioned. Satan is a diligent, watchful, and crafty adversary, he will neglect no opportunity, no advantage that is offered to him. Wherein then soever, our spiritual strength is impaired by sin, or which way soever our lusts

press, Satan falls in with that weakness, and presses towards that ruin. So that all the actings of the law of sin are subservient to this end of Satan. I shall therefore only at present mention one or two, that seem principally to invite Satan to attempt a return.

First: It entangles the soul in the things of the world, all which are so many purveyors for Satan. When Pharaoh had let the people go, he heard after a while that they were entangled in the wilderness, and supposed that he should therefore now overtake them and destroy them. This stirs him up to pursue after them. Satan finding those whom he has been cast out from, entangled in the things of the world, by which he is sure to find an easy access to them, is encouraged to attempt upon them afresh; as the spider to come down upon the strongest fly that is entangled in his web. For he comes, by his temptations, only to impel them to that whereunto, by their own lusts, they are inclined, by adding poison to their lusts, and painting to the objects of them. And oftentimes by this advantage he gets so in upon the souls of men, that they are never well free of him more whilst they live. And as men's diversions increase from the world, so do their entanglements from Satan. When they have more to do in the world than they can well manage, they shall have more to do from Satan than they can well withstand. When men are made spiritually faint, by dealing in and with the world, Satan sets on them as Amalek did on the faint and weak of the people that came out of Egypt.

Secondly: It produces this effect by making the soul negligent, and taking it off from its watch We have before showed at large, that it is one main

part of the effectual deceitfulness of indwelling sin, to make the soul inadvertent, to turn it off from the diligent watchful attendance to its duty, which is required. Now there is not any thing in reference whereunto diligence and watchfulness is more strictly enjoined, than the returning assaults of Satan. "Be sober, be vigilant;" and why so? "Because of your adversary the Devil." 1 Pet. v. 8. Unless you are exceeding watchful, at one time or other he will surprise you. And all the injunctions of our blessed Saviour, to watch, are still with reference to him and his temptations. Now when the soul is made careless and inadvertent, forgetting what an enemy it has to deal with, or is lifted up with the successes it has newly obtained against him, then is Satan's time to attempt a reentrance of his old habitation; which if he cannot obtain, yet he makes their lives uncomfortable to themselves, and unfruitful to others, in weakening their root, and withering their fruit, through his poisonous temptations. He comes down upon our duties of obedience, as the fowls upon Abraham's sacrifice, that if we watch not as he did, to drive them away, (for by resistance he is overcome and put to flight,) he will devour them.

Thirdly: Indwelling sin takes advantage to put forth its efficacy and deceit, to withdraw men from their primitive zeal and holiness, from their first faith, love, and works, by the evil examples of professors amongst whom they live. When men first engage in the ways of God, they have a reverent esteem of those whom they believe to have been made partakers of that mercy before themselves; these they love and honour, as it is their duty. But after a while, they find many of them walking in many things unevenly, crookedly, and not unlike

the men of the world. Here sin is not wanting to its advantage. Insensibly it prevails with men to a compliance with them. This way, this course of walking, does well enough with others, why may it not do so with us also? Such is the inward thought of many, that works effectually in them, and so, through the craft of sin, the generations of professors corrupt one another. As a stream arising from a clear spring or fountain, whilst it runs in its own peculiar channel, and keeps its waters unmixed, preserves its purity and clearness; but when it falls, in its course, with other streams, which are turbid and foul though running the same way with it, it becomes muddy and discoloured also; so it is in this case. Believers come forth from the spring of the new birth with some purity and cleanness; this, for a while, they keep in the course of their private walking with God; but now when they come sometimes to fall into society with others, whose profession flows and runs the same way with theirs, even toward heaven, but yet are muddied and sullied with sin and the world, they are often corrupted with them and by them, and so decline from their first purity, faith, and holiness. Now, lest this may have been the case of any who shall read this discourse, I shall add some few cautions, that are necessary to preserve men from this infection.

First: In the body of professors there is a great number of hypocrites. Though we cannot say of this or that man, that he is so, yet that some there are is most certain. Our Saviour has told us that it will be so to the end of the world. All that have oil in their lamps, have it not in their vessels. Let men take heed how they give themselves up to a conformity to the professors they meet with, lest

instead of saints, and the best of men, they sometimes propose for their example hypocrites, which are the worst, and when they think they are like to them who bear the image of God, they conform themselves to those who bear the image of Satan.

Secondly: You know not what may be the present temptations of those whose ways you observe. It may be they are under some peculiar desertion from God, and so are withering for a season, until he send them some refreshing showers from above. It may be they are entangled with some special corruptions, which is their burden, that you know not of; and for any voluntarily to fall into such a frame, as others are cast into by the power of their temptations, or to think that will suffice in them, which they see to suffice in others whose distempers they know not, is folly and presumption. He that knows such or such a person to be a living man, and of a healthy constitution, if he see him go crawling up and down about his affairs, feeble, and weak, sometimes falling, sometimes standing, and making small progress in any thing, will he think it sufficient for himself to do so also? Will he not inquire whether the person he sees, has not lately fallen into some distemper or sickness that has weakened him, and brought him into that condition? Assuredly he would do so. Take heed, Christians; many of the professors with whom ye do converse are sick and wounded; the wounds of some of them do stink, and are corrupt because of their folly. If you have any spiritual health, do not think their weak and uneven walking will be accepted at your hands; much less think it will be well for you to become sick and to be wounded also.

Thirdly: Remember that of many of the best

Christians, the worst only is known and seen. Many who keep up precious communion with God, do yet oftentimes by natural tempers of freedom or passion, not carry so glorious appearances as others, who perhaps come short of them in grace and the power of godliness. In respect of their outward conversation it may seem they are scarcely saved, when in respect of their faith and love, they may be eminent. They may, as the king's daughter, be all glorious within, though their clothes be not always of wrought gold. Take heed then that you be not infected with their worst, when ye are not able, it may be, to imitate them in their best; but to return.

Fourthly: Sin does this work by cherishing some secret particular lust in the heart. This the soul contends against faintly. It contends against it upon the account of sincerity, it cannot but do so; but it does not make thorough work, vigorously to mortify it by the strength and power of grace. Now where it is thus with a soul, an habitual declension as to holiness will assuredly ensue. David shows us how in his first days he kept his heart close unto God, "I was upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity." Psalm xviii. 23. His great care was lest any lust should prevail in him, or upon him, that might be called his iniquity in a peculiar manner. The same course steered Paul also, 1 Cor. ix. 27; he was in danger to be lifted up by his spiritual revelations and enjoyments: this makes him keep his body in subjection, that no carnal reasonings or vain imagination might take place in him. But where indwelling sin has provoked, irritated, and given strength to a special lust, it proves assuredly a principal means of a general declension. For as an infirmity and weakness in any one vital part, will make the whole

body consumptive, so will the weakness in any one grace, which a perplexing lust brings with it, make the soul. It every way weakens spiritual strength. It weakens confidence in God in faith and prayer. The knees will be feeble, and the hands will hang down, in dealing with God, where a galling and unmortified lust lies in the heart. It will take such hold upon the soul, "that it shall not be able to look up." Psalm. xl. 12. It darkens the mind by innumerable foolish imaginations, which it stirs up to make provision for itself. It galls the conscience with those spots and stains, which in and by its actings it brings upon the soul. It contends in the will for rule and dominion: an active stirring corruption would have the commanding power in the soul, and it is ever and anon ready to take the throne. It disturbs the thoughts, and sometimes will even frighten the soul from dealing with it by meditation, lest corrupt affections being entangled by it, grace lose ground instead of prevailing. It breaks out oftentimes into scandalous sins, as it did in David and Hezekiah, and loads the sinner with sorrow and discouragement. By these and the like means it becomes to the soul like a moth in a garment, to eat up and devour the strongest threads of it, so that though the whole hang loose together, it is easily torn in pieces. Though the soul with whom it is thus, does for a season keep up a fair profession, yet his strength is secretly devoured; and every temptation tears and rends his conscience at pleasure. It becomes with such men as it is with some who have for many years been of a sound, strong, athletic constitution. Some secret hectical distemper seizes on them; for a season they take no notice of it: or if they do, they think they shall do well enough with it, and easily shake it off

when they have a little leisure to attend to it; but for the present they think as Samson with his locks cut, they will do as at other times. Sometimes it may be they complain that they are not well, they know not what aileth them, and it may be rise violently in an opposition to their distemper; but after struggling in vain awhile, the vigour of their spirits and strength failing them, they are forced to yield to the power of a consumption. And now all they can do is little enough to keep them alive. It is so with men brought into spiritual decays by any secret perplexing corruptions. It may be they have had a vigorous principle of obedience and holiness: indwelling sin watching its opportunities, by some temptation or other, has kindled and inflamed some particular lust in them. For a while it may be they take little notice of it, sometimes they complain, but think they will do as in former times, until being insensibly weakened in their spiritual strength, they have work enough to do in keeping alive what remains and is ready to die. I shall not add any thing here as to the prevention and obviating this advantage of indwelling sin, having elsewhere treated of it peculiarly and apart.

Fifthly: It works by negligence of private communion with God in prayer and meditation. I have showed before how indwelling sin puts forth its deceitfulness in diverting the soul from watchfulness, in and to these duties. Here, if it prevails, it will not fail to induce an habitual declension in the whole course of obedience. All neglect of private duties is principled by a weariness of God; as he complains, "Thou hast not called upon me, thou hast been weary of me." Isa. xliii. 22. Neglect of invocation proceeds from weariness. And where there is weariness, there

will be withdrawing from that whereof we are weary. Now God alone being the fountain and spring of spiritual life, if there be weariness of him, and withdrawing from him, it is impossible but that there will be a decay in the life to ensue. Indeed what men are in these duties, I mean as to faith and love in them, that they are and no more. Here lies the root of their obedience, and if this fails, all fruit will quickly fail. You may sometimes see a tree flourishing with leaves and fruit goodly and pleasant. After a while the leaves begin to decay, the fruit to wither, the whole to droop. Search, and you shall find the root, whereby it should draw in moisture and fatness from the earth to supply the body and branches with sap and juice for growth and fruit, has received a wound, is some way perished, and does not perform its duty, so that though the branches are flourishing a while with what they had received, their sustenance being intercepted, they must decay. So it is here. These duties of private communion with God, are the means of receiving supplies of spiritual strength from him ; of sap and fatness from Christ, the vine and olive. Whilst they do so, the conversation and course of obedience flourishes and is fruitful, all outward duties are cheerfully and regularly performed. But if there be a wound, a defect, a failing in that which should first take in the spiritual radical moisture, that should be communicated to the whole, the rest may, for a season, maintain their station and appearance, but after a while, profession will wither, fruits will decay, and the whole be ready to die. Hence our Saviour lets us know, Matt. vi. 6, what a man is in secret, in these private duties, that he is in the eyes of God and no more. And one reason amongst others is, because they have a more

vigorous acting of unmixed grace than any other duties whatever. In all our most particular duties, besides the influence that they may have from carnal respects, which are many, and the ways of their insinuation subtle, and imperceptible, there is an alloy of gifts, which sometimes even devours the pure gold of grace which should be the chief and principal in them. In these, there is immediate intercourse between God and that which is of himself in the soul. If once sin, by its deceits and treacheries, prevail to take off the soul from diligent attendance to communion with God and constancy in these duties, it will not fail to effect a declining in the whole of a man's obedience. It has made its entrance, and will assuredly make good its progress.

Sixthly: Growing in notions of truth without answerable practice, is another thing that indwelling sin makes use of to bring the souls of believers under a decay. The apostle tells us, that, "knowledge puffeth up." 1 Cor. viii. 1. If it be alone, not improved in practice, it swells men beyond a due proportion. Like a man that has a dropsy, we are not to expect that he has strength to his bigness; like trees that are continually running up a head, which keeps them from bearing fruit. When once men have attained to this, that they can entertain and receive evangelical truths in a new and more glorious light, or more clear discovery than formerly, or new manifestations of truth which they knew not before, and please themselves in so doing, without diligent endeavours to have the power of those truths and notions upon their hearts, and their souls made conformable to them, they generally learn so to dispose of all truths formerly known, which were sometimes in-

laid in their hearts, with more efficacy and power. This has proved, if not the ruin, yet the great impairing of many in these days of light wherein we live. By this means, from humble close walking, many have withered into an empty, barren, talking profession. All things almost have in a short season become alike to them. Have they been true or false, so they may be debating of them, and disputing about them, all is well. This is food for sin, it hatches, increases it, and is increased by it. A notable way it is for the vanity that is in the mind, to exert itself without a rebuke from conscience. Whilst men are talking, and writing, and studying about religion, and hearing preaching, it may be with great delight, as those in Ezekiel, chap. xxxiii. 32, conscience, unless thoroughly awake and circumspect, and furnished with spiritual wisdom and care, will be very well pacified, and enter no rebukes or pleas against the way that the soul is in. But yet all this may be nothing but the acting of that natural vanity which lies in the mind, and is a principal part of the sin we treat of. And generally this is so, when men content themselves, as was said, with the notions of truth, without labouring after an experience of the power of them in their hearts, and the bringing forth the fruit of them in their lives, on which a decay must needs ensue.

Seventhly: Growth in carnal wisdom is another help to sin, in producing this sad effect. "Thy wisdom and thy knowledge," says the prophet, "hath perverted thee." Isa. xlvii. 10. So much as carnal wisdom increases, so much faith decays. The proper work of this is, to teach a man to trust to and in himself; of faith, to trust wholly in another. So it labours to destroy the whole work of faith,

by causing the soul to return into a deceiving fulness of his own. We have woful examples of the prevalency of this principle of declension, in the days wherein we live. How many a poor, humble, broken-hearted creature, who followed after God in simplicity of spirit, have we seen, through the observation of the ways and walkings of others, and closing with the temptations to craft and subtlety, which opportunities in the world have administered to them, come to be dipped into a worldly carnal frame, and utterly to wither in their profession. Many are so sullied hereby, that they are not to be known to be the men they were.

Eighthly: Some great sin lying long in the heart and conscience unrepented of, or not repented of as it ought, and as the matter requires, furthers indwelling sin in this work. The great turn of the life of David, whence his "first ways" carried the reputation, was in the harbouring his great sin in his conscience without suitable repentance. It was otherwise we know with Peter, and he had another issue. A great sin will certainly give a great turn to the life of a professor. If it be well cured in the blood of Christ, with that humiliation which the gospel requires, it often proves a means of more watchfulness, fruitfulness, humility, and contention, than ever the soul before obtained. If it be neglected, it certainly hardens the heart, weakens spiritual strength, enfeebles the soul, discouraging it to all communion with God, and is a notable principle of a general decay. So David complains, "My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness." Psal. xxxviii. 5. His present distemper was not so much from his sin, as his folly; not so much from the wounds he had received, as from his neglect to make a timely application for their

cure. It is like a broken bone, which being well set, leaves the place stronger than before; if otherwise, makes the man a cripple all his days. These things we do but briefly name, and sundry other advantages of the like nature, that sin makes use of to produce this effect, might also be instanced in; but these may suffice to our present purpose. Whatever it uses, itself is still the principle; and this is no small demonstration of its efficacy and power.

CHAPTER XVI.

The strength of Indwelling Sin manifested from its power and effects in persons unregenerate.

It is of the power and efficacy of indwelling sin as it remains, in several degrees in believers, that we are treating. Now I have elsewhere showed, that the nature, and all the natural properties of it, do still remain in them. Though, therefore, we cannot prove directly what is the strength of sin in them, from what its power is in those in whom it is only checked, and not at all weakened; yet we may, from an observation thereof, caution believers of the real power of that mortal enemy, with whom they have to do.

If the plague do violently rage in one city, destroying multitudes, and there be, in another, an infection of the same kind, which yet arises not to that height and fury there, by reason of the correction that it meets with from a better air, and remedies used; yet a man may demonstrate to the

inhabitants, the force and danger of that infection got in among them, by the effects that it has and does produce among others, who have not the benefit of the preventives and preservatives which they enjoy; which will both teach them to value the means of their preservation, and be the more watchful against the power of the infection that is amongst them. It is so in this case. Believers may be taught what is the power and efficacy of that plague of sin which is in and among them, by the effects the same plague produces in and among others, who have not those corrections of its poison, and those preservatives from death, which the Lord Jesus has furnished them with.

Having then fixed on the demonstration of the power of sin from the effects it produces, and having given a double instance hereof in believers themselves, I shall now further evidence the same truth, or pursue the same evidence of it, by showing somewhat of the power that it has in them who are unregenerate, and so have not the remedies against it, with which believers are furnished.

I shall not handle the whole power of sin in unregenerate persons, which is a very large field, and not the business I have in hand; but only by some few instances of its effects in them, intimate, as I said, to believers, what they have to deal with.

First, then: It appears in the violence it offers to the nature of men, compelling them to sins, fully contrary to all the principles of the reasonable nature wherewith they are endued from God. Every creature of God has, in its creation, a law of operation implanted in it, which is the rule of all that proceeds from it, of all that it does of its own accord. So the fire ascends upwards; bodies that are weighty and heavy descend: the water flows,

each according to the principles of their nature, which give them the law of their operation. That which hinders them in their operation, is force and violence, as that which hinders a stone from descending, or the fire from going upwards. That which forces them to move contrary to the law of their nature, as a stone to go upwards, or the fire to descend, is, in its kind, the greatest violence, of which the degrees are endless. Now that which should take a great millstone, and fling it upwards into the air, all would acknowledge to be a matter of wondrous force, power, and efficacy.

Man also has this law of operation and working, concreated with him. And this may be considered two ways; either, first, as it is common to him with other creatures; or as peculiar, with reference to that special end for which he was created. Some things are, I say, in this law of nature common to man with other creatures: as to nourish their young, to live quietly with those of the same kind and race with them; to seek and follow after that which is good for them in that state and condition wherein they are created. These are things which all brute living creatures have in the law of their nature, as man also has.

But now, besides these things, man being created in an especial manner to give glory to God, by rational and moral obedience, and so to obtain a reward in the enjoyment of him, there are many things in the law of his creation that are peculiar to him; as, to love God above all; to seek the enjoyment of him as his chiefest good and last end; to inquire after his mind and will, and to yield obedience, and the like. All which are part of the law of his nature.

Now these things are not distinguished, so as

though a man might perform the actions of the law of his nature, which are common to him with other creatures, merely from the principles of his nature, as they do; but the law of his dependence upon God, and doing all things in obedience to him passes on them all also. He can never be considered as a mere creature, but as a creature made for the glory of God, by rational moral obedience; rational, because by him chosen, and performed with reason; and moral, because regulated by a law whereto reason attends.

For instance, it is common to man, with other creatures, to take care for the nourishing of his children, of the young helpless ones, that receive their being by him.—There is implanted in him, in the principles of his nature, concreated with them, a love and care for them; so it is with other living creatures. Now let other creatures answer this instinct and inclination, and be not hardened against them like the foolish ostrich, to whom God has not imparted this natural wisdom, Job xxxix. 16, 17, they fully answer the law of their creation. With man it is not so; it is not enough for him to answer the instinct and secret impulse and inclination of his nature and kind, as in the nourishing of his children; but he must do it also in subjection to God, and obey him therein, and do it to his glory; the law of moral obedience passing over all his whole being, and all his operations; but in these things lie, as it were, the whole of a man, namely, in the things which are implanted in his nature as a creature, common to him with all other living creatures, seconded by the command or will of God, as he is a creature capable of yielding moral obedience, and doing all things for his glory.

That, then, which shall drive and compel a man to transgress this law of his nature, which is not only as to throw millstones upward, to drive beasts from taking care of their young, to take from cattle of the same kind the herding of themselves in quietness, but moreover to cast off what lies in him, his fundamental dependence on God, as a creature made to yield him obedience, must needs be esteemed of great force and efficacy.

Now, this is frequently done by indwelling sin, in persons unregenerate. Let us take some few instances.

First: There is nothing that is more deeply inlaid in the principles of the natures of all living creatures, and so of man himself, than a love to, and a care for, the preservation and nourishing of their young: many brute creatures will die for them; some feed them with their own flesh and blood; all deprive themselves of that food which nature directs them to as their best, to impart it to them; and acting in their behalf to the utmost of their power.

Now, such is the efficacy, power, and force of indwelling sin in man, an infection that the nature of other creatures knows nothing of, that in many it prevails to stop this fountain, to beat back the stream of natural affections, to root up the principles of the law of nature, and to drive them to a neglect, a destruction of the fruit of their own loins. Paul tells us of the old Gentiles, that they were ἄστοργοι, Rom. i. 31, "without natural affection;" that which he aims at, is that barbarous custom among the Romans, who ofttimes, to spare the trouble in the education of their children, and to be at liberty to satisfy their lusts, destroyed their own children

from the womb. So far did the strength of sin pre vail to obliterate the law of nature, and to repel the force and power of it.

Examples of this nature are common in all nations; amongst ourselves, of women murdering their own children through the deceitful reasoning of sin. And herein sin turns the strong current of nature, darkens all the light of God in the soul, controls all natural principles, influenced with the power of the command and will of God.—But yet this evil has, through the efficacy of sin, received a fearful aggravation. Men have not only slain, but cruelly sacrificed their children to satisfy their lusts. The apostle reckons idolatry, and so, consequently, all superstition among the works of the flesh, Gal. v. 20; that is, the fruit and product of indwelling sin. Now from hence it is that men have offered that horrid and unspeakable violence to the law of nature mentioned. So the Psalmist tells us, Psal. cvi. 37, 38. The same is again mentioned in sundry other places of scripture. The whole manner of that abomination I have elsewhere declared. For the present it may suffice to intimate, that they took their children and burnt them to ashes in a slow fire: the wicked priests that assisted in the sacrifice affording them this relief, that they made a noise and clamour, that the vile wretches might not hear the woful moans and cries of the poor dying tormented infants. I suppose in this case we need no further evidence. Naturalists can give no rational account; they can only admire the secret force of that little fish, which, they say, will stop a ship in full sail in the midst of the sea. And we must acknowledge, that it is beyond our power to give an account of the secret forces and unsearchable deceit that is in this inbred traitor sin, that

can not only stop the course of nature, when all the sails of it that carry it forward are so filled, as they are in that of affections to children, but also drive it backward with such a violence and force as to cause men so to deal with their own children, as a good man would not be hired with any reward to deal with his dog. And it may not be to the disadvantage of the best, to know and consider that they carry that about them, and in them, which in others has produced these effects.

The like may be spoken of all other sins against the prime dictates of the law of nature, that mankind is, or has been stained and defamed withal. Murder of parents and children, of wives and husbands, sodomy, incest, and the like enormities; in all which sin prevails in men against the whole law of their being and dependence upon God.

Why should I reckon up the murder by Cain, the treason of Judas, with their aggravations; or remind of the filth and villany of Nero, in whom sin seemed to design an instance of what it could debase the nature of man to? In a word, all the studied, premeditated perjuries; all the designed bloody revenges; all the filth and uncleanness; all the enmity to God and his ways that is in the world, is fruit growing from this root alone.

Secondly: It evidences its efficacy in keeping men off from believing under the dispensation of the gospel. This evidence must be a little further cleared.

First: Under the dispensation of the gospel, there are but few that do believe. So the preachers of it complain, "Who hath believed our report?" Isa. liii. 1, which the apostle interprets of the paucity of believers, John xii. 38. Our Saviour, Christ himself tells us, that "many are called," the word

is preached to many, "but few are chosen." And so the church complains of its number. Mic. vi. 1. Few there be who enter the narrow gate, daily experience confirms this woful observation. How many villages, parishes, yea towns, may we go to, where the gospel, it may be, has been preached for many years, and perhaps scarce meet a true believer in them, and one who shows forth the death of Christ in his conversation. In the best places, and most eminent for profession, are not such persons like the berries after the shaking of an olive tree, two or three in the top of the utmost boughs, and four or five in the highest branches?

Secondly: There is proposed to men in the preaching of the gospel, as motives to believing, every thing in conjunction, that severally prevail with men to do whatever else they do in their lives. Whatever any one does with consideration, he does it either because it is reasonable and good for him so to do; or profitable and advantageous; or pleasant, or, lastly, necessary for the avoidance of evil; whatever, I say, men do with consideration, whether it be good or evil; whether it be in the works of this life, or in things that lead to another; they do it from one or other of the reasons or motives mentioned. And, God knows, oftentimes they are very poor and mean in their kind that men are prevailed upon by. How often will men for a very little pleasure, a very little profit, be induced to do that which shall imbitter their lives, and damn their souls! And what industry will they use to avoid that which they apprehend evil or grievous to them! And any one of these is enough to oil the wheels of men's utmost endeavours, and set men at work to the purpose.

But now all these things centre in the proposal

of the gospel, and the command of believing; and every one of them in a kind, that the whole world can propose nothing like to it.

It is the most reasonable thing that can be proposed to the understanding of a man; that he who, through his own default, has lost that way of bringing glory to God, and saving his own soul, (for which ends he was made,) that he was first placed in, should accept of, and embrace that other blessed, easy, safe, excellent way, for the attaining of the ends mentioned, which God in infinite grace, love, mercy, wisdom, and righteousness has found out, and proposes to him. And,

Secondly: It is the most profitable thing that a man can possibly be invited to; if there be any profit or benefit, any advantage in the forgiveness of sins, in the love and favour of God, in a blessed immortality, in eternal glory. And,

Thirdly: It is most pleasant also; surely it is a pleasant thing to be brought out of darkness into light; out of a dungeon to a throne; from captivity and slavery to Satan and cursed lusts, to the glorious liberty of the children of God, with a thousand heavenly sweetnesses not now to be mentioned. And,

Fourthly: It is surely necessary, and that not only from the command of God, who has the supreme authority over us, but also indispensably so for the avoidance of eternal ruin of body and soul. Mark xvi. 16. It is constantly proposed under these terms, believe, or you perish under the weight of the wrath of the great God, and that for evermore.

But now, notwithstanding that all these considerations are preached to men, and pressed upon them in the name of the great God, from day to

day, from one year to another, yet, as was before observed, very few there are who set their hearts to them, so as to embrace that which they lead to. Tell men ten thousand times, that this is wisdom, yea, riches, that all their profit lies in it, that they will assuredly and eternally perish, and that it may be within a few hours, if they receive not the gospel; assure them that it is their only interest and concernment; let them know that God himself speaks all this to them; yet all is one, they regard it not, set not their hearts to it; but, as it were, plainly say, We will have nothing to do with these things; they will rather perish in their lusts than accept of mercy.

Thirdly: It is indwelling sin that both disenables men to, and hinders them from, believing, and that alone. Blindness of mind, stubbornness of the will, sensuality of the affections, all concur to keep poor perishing souls at a distance from Christ. Men are made blind by sin, and cannot see his excellencies; obstinate, and will not lay hold of his righteousness; senseless, and take no notice of their own eternal concerns.

Now certainly that which can prevail with men, wise and sober, and prudent in other things, to neglect and despise the love of God, the blood of Christ, the eternal welfare of their own souls, upon weak and worthless pretences, must be acknowledged to have an astonishing force and efficacy accompanying it.

Whose heart, who has once heard of the ways of God, can but bleed to see poor souls eternally perishing under a thousand gracious invitations, to accept of mercy and pardon in the blood of Christ? And can we but be astonished at the power of that principle from whence it is, that they run headlong

to their own destruction? And yet all this befalls them from the power and deceit of sin that dwells in them.

3. It is evident in their total apostasies. Many men not really converted, are much wrought upon by the word. The apostle tells us, that they do "clean escape from them that live in error." 2 Pet. ii. 18. They separate themselves from idolatry and false worship, owning and professing the truth; and they also escape "the pollution of the world," verse 20; that is, "the corruption that is in the world through lust," as he expresses it, chap i. 4; those filthy, corrupt, and unclean ways, which the men of the world, in the pursuit of their lusts, do walk and live in; these they escape from, in the amendment of their lives, and ordering of their conversation according to the convictions which they have from the word. For so he tells us that all this is brought about, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; that is, by the preaching of the gospel, they are so far wrought upon, as to forsake all ways of false worship, to profess the truth, to reform their lives, and to walk answerably to the convictions that are upon them.

By this means do they gain the reputation of professors, "They have a name to live." Rev. iii 1; and are made partakers of some, or all of those privileges of the gospel, that are numbered by the apostle. Heb. vi. 4, 5.

It is not my present business to show how far, or wherein a man may be effectually wrought upon by the word, and yet not be really wrought over to close with Christ; or what may be the utmost bounds and limits of a common grace upon unregenerate men; it is on all hands confessed, that it may be carried on so far, that it is very difficult to

discern between its effects and productions, and those of that grace which is special and saving.

But now, notwithstanding all this, we see many of these daily fall off from God, utterly and wickedly; some into debauchery and uncleanness, some to worldliness and covetousness, some to be persecutors of the saints, all to the perdition of their own souls. How this comes about, the apostle declares in that place mentioned, they are, says he, entangled again: to entice and entangle as I have showed before, from James i. 14, 15, is the proper work of indwelling sin; it is that alone which entangles the soul; as the apostle speaks, verse 18. They are allured from their whole profession, into cursed apostasy, through the lusts of the flesh.

It prevails upon them through its deceit and power to an utter relinquishment of their profession; and their whole engagement to God: and this several ways evinces the greatness of its strength and efficacy.

1. In that it gives stop or control to that exceeding greatness of power, which is put forth in the word, in their conviction and reformation. We see it, by experience, that men are not easily wrought upon by the word; the most of men can live under the dispensation of it, all the days of their lives, and continue as senseless and stupid as the seats they sit upon, or the flint in the rock of stone. Mighty difficulties and prejudices must be conquered, great strokes must be given to the conscience, before this can be brought about. It is as the stopping of a river in his course, and turning his streams another way; the hindering of a stone in its falling downwards, or the turning away of the wild ass, when furiously set to pursue his way, as the prophet speaks, Jer. ii. 24; to turn

men from their corrupt ways, sins, and pleasures; to make them fast, pray, hear, and do many things contrary to the principles of flesh, which is secretly predominant in them, willingly and gladly; to cause them to profess Christ and the gospel, it may be under some trials and reproaches; to give them light, to see into sundry mysteries and gifts, for the discharge of sundry duties; to make dead, blind, senseless men, to walk, and talk, and do all the outward offices and duties of living and healthy men; with the like attendances of conviction and reformation, are the effects and products of mighty power and strength. Indeed the power that the Holy Ghost puts forth by the word, in the staggering and conviction of sinners, in the awakening of their consciences, the enlightening of their minds, the changing of their affections, the aweing of their hearts, the reforming of their lives, and compelling them to duties, is inexpressible.

But now, to all these is there check and control given by indwelling sin. It prevails against this whole work of the Spirit by the word, with all the advantages of providential dispensations, in afflictions, and mercies, wherewith it is attended. When sin is once enraged, all these things become but like the withs and cords wherewith Samson was bound, before his head was shaven; cry but to it, The Philistines are upon thee: here is a subtle, a suitable temptation, now show thy strength and efficacy; all these become like tow that has smelt the fire. Conscience is stifled, reputation in the church of God despised, light supplanted, the impressions of the word cast off, convictions digested, heaven and hell are despised; sin makes its way through all and utterly turns the soul from the good and right ways of God. Sometimes it does this

subtlely, by imperceptible degrees, taking off all force of former impressions from the Spirit, by the word; sullying conscience by degrees; hardening the heart, and making sensual the affections, by various workings, that the poor backslider in heart scarce knows what he is doing, until he be come to the very bottom of all impiety, profaneness, and enmity against God. Sometimes falling in conjunction with some vigorous temptation, it suddenly, and at once, plunges the soul into a course of alienation from God, and the profession of his ways.

2. It takes them off from those hopes of heaven, which, upon their convictions, obedience, and temporary faith, or believing, they had obtained. There is a general hope of heaven, or, at least, of the escaping of hell, of an untroublesome immortality, in the most sottish and stupid souls in the world, who, either by tradition, or instruction from the word, are persuaded that there is another state of things to come after this life; but it is in unconvinced, unenlightened persons, a dull, senseless, unaffecting thing, that has no other hold upon them, nor power in them, but only to keep them free from the trouble and perplexity of contrary thoughts and apprehensions. The matter is otherwise with them, who, by the word, are so wrought upon as we have before declared; their hope of heaven, and a blessed immortality, is ofttimes accompanied with great joys, and exultations, and is a relief to them, under and against the worst of their fears and trials; it is such, as they would not part with for all the world; and upon all occasions they retreat in their minds to it, for comfort and relief.

Now all this by the power of sin are they prevailed with to forego. Let heaven go if it will,

a blessed immortality with the enjoyment of God himself, sin must be served, and provision made to fulfil the lusts thereof.

If a man, in the things of this world, had such a hope of a large inheritance, of a kingdom, as wherein he is satisfied that it will not fail him, but that, in the issue he shall surely enjoy it, and lead a happy and a glorious life in the possession of it many days; if one should go to him, and tell him, it is true, the kingdom you look for is an ample and honourable dominion, full of all good things desirable, and you may attain it; but come, cast away all hopes and expectations of it, and come join with me in the service and slavery of such or such an oppressive tyrant. You will easily grant, he must have some strange bewitching power with him, that should prevail with a man in his wits to follow his advice.

Yet thus it is, and much more so, in the case we have in hand. Sin itself cannot deny, but that the kingdom of heaven, which the soul is in hope and expectation of, is glorious and excellent; nor does it go about to convince him that his thoughts of it are vain, and such as will deceive him; but plainly prevails with him to cast away his hopes, to despise his kingdom that he was in expectation of, and that upon no other motive, but that he may serve some worldly, cruel, or filthy and sensual lust. Certainly, here lies a secret efficacy, whose depths cannot be fathomed.

3. The apostle manifests the power of the entanglements of sin in and upon apostates, in that it turns them off from "the way of righteousness after they have known it." 2 Pet. ii. 21. It will be found at the last day an evil thing and a bitter, that men live all their days in the service of sin, self,

and the world, refusing to make any trial of the ways of God, whereunto they are invited; though they have no experience of their excellency, beauty, pleasantness, safety: yet having evidence brought to them from God himself that they are so, the refusal of them will, I say, be bitterness in the latter end. But their condition is yet far worse, who, as the apostle speaks, having known the way of righteousness, are by the power of indwelling sin turned aside from the holy commandment. To leave God for the devil, after a man has made some trial of him and his service; heaven for hell, after a man has had some cheering, refreshing thoughts of it; the fellowship of the saints, for an ale-house or a brothel-house, after a man has been admitted unto their communion, and tasted of the pleasantness of it: to leave walking in pure, clear, straight paths, to wallow in mire, draughts, and filth, this will be for a lamentation. Yet this does sin prevail upon apostates to; and that against all their light, conviction, experiences, professions, engagements, or whatever may be strong upon them to keep them up to the known ways of righteousness.

4. It evinces its strength in them by prevailing with them to a total renunciation of God as revealed in Christ, and the power of all gospel truth, in the sin against the Holy Ghost. I do not now precisely determine what is the sin against the Holy Ghost, nor wherein it does consist. There are different apprehensions of it; all agree in this, that by it an end is put to all dealings between God and man in a way of grace. It is a sin unto death. And this does the hardness and blindness of many men's hearts bring them to, they are by them at length set out of the reach of mercy. They choose to have no more to do with God; and God swears that they

shall never enter into his rest. So sin brings forth death. A man by it is brought to renounce the end for which he was made; wilfully to reject the means of his coming to the enjoyment of God, to provoke him to his face; and so to perish in his rebellion.

I have not mentioned these things as though I hoped by them to set out to the full the power of indwelling sin in unregenerate men; only by a few instances I thought to give a glimpse of it. He that would have a fuller view of it, had need only to open his eyes, to take a little view of that wickedness which reigns, yea, rages all the world over. Let him consider the prevailing flood of the things mentioned by Paul to be "the fruits of the flesh." Gal. v. 19, 20, 21, that is, among the sons of men, in all places, nations, cities, towns, parishes; and then let him add thereto but this one consideration, that the world which is full of the steam, filth, and blood of these abominations, as to their outward actings of them, is a pleasant garden, a paradise, compared to the heart of man, wherein they are all conceived; and hourly millions of more vile abominations, which being stifled in the womb, by some of the ways before insisted on, they are never able to bring forth to light. Let a man, I say, using the law for his light and rule, take this course, and if he have any spiritual discerning, he may quickly attain satisfaction in this matter.

And I showed in the entrance of this discourse, how this consideration does fully confirm the truth proposed.

CHAPTER XVII.

The strength of Sin evidenced from its resistance to the power of the law.

The measure of the strength of any person, or defenced city, may well be taken from the opposition that they are able to withstand, and not be prevailed against. If we hear of a city that has endured a long siege from a potent enemy, and yet is not taken or conquered, whose walls have endured great batteries, and none are demolished, though we have never seen the place, yet we conclude it strong, if not impregnable.

And this consideration will also evidence the power and strength of indwelling sin; it is able to hold out, and not only to live, but also to secure its reign and dominion against very strong opposition that is made to it.

I shall instance only in the opposition that is made to it by the law, which is oftentimes great and terrible, always fruitless, all its assaults are borne by it, and it is not prevailed against. There are sundry things wherein the law opposes itself to sin, and the power of it. As,

First: It discovers it. Sin in the soul is like a secret hectical distemper in the body, its being unknown and unperceived, is one great means of its prevalency. Or, as traitors in a civil state, whilst they lie hid, they vigorously carry on their design. The greatest part of men in the world, know nothing of this sickness, yea, death of their souls. Though they have been taught somewhat of the

doctrine of it, yet they know nothing of its power. They know it not so as to deal with it as their mortal enemy. As a man, whatever he be told, cannot be said to know that he has a hectical fever, if he love his life, and set not himself to stop its progress.

This, then the law does, it discovers this enemy; it convinces the soul that there is such a traitor harbouring in his bosom: "I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Rom. vii. 7. I had not known it, that is, fully, clearly, distinctly. Conscience will somewhat tumultuate about it; but a man cannot know it clearly and distinctly from hence. It gives a man such a sight of it, as the blind man had in the gospel; upon the first touch of his eyes, he saw men like trees walking, obscurely, confusedly; but when the law comes, that gives the soul a distinct sight of this indwelling sin. Again, I had not known it, that is, the depths of it, the root, the habitual inclination to sin, which is here called lust; as it is by James i. 14, had not known it, or not known it to be sin, but by the law.

This, then, the law does, it draws out this traitor from its secret lurking-places, the intimate recesses of the soul. A man, when the law comes, is no more ignorant of his enemy; if he will now perish by him, it is openly and knowingly; he cannot but say, that the law warned him of him, discovered him to him, yea, and raised a concourse about him in the soul, of various affections, as an officer does, that discovers a thief or robber, calling out for assistance to apprehend him.

Secondly: The law not only discovers sin, but discovers it to be a very bad inmate, dangerous,

yea, pernicious to the soul. "Was then that which is good (that is, the law) made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." Rom. vii. 13. There are many things in this verse wherein we are not at present concerned; that which I only aim at, is the manifestation of sin by the law; it appears to be sin: and the manifestation of it, in its own colours, appears to be exceeding sinful. The law gives the soul to know the filth and guilt of this indwelling sin, how great they are, how vile it is; what an abomination, what an enmity to God, how hateful of him! The soul shall never more look upon it as a small matter, what thoughts soever it had of it before, whereby it is greatly surprised.

As a man that finds himself somewhat distempered, sending for a physician of skill, when he comes, requires his judgment of his distemper. He, considering his condition, tells him, alas! I am sorry for you, the case is far otherwise with you than you imagine; your disease is mortal, and it has proceeded so far, pressing upon your spirits, and infecting the whole mass of your blood, that I doubt, unless most effectual remedies be used, you will live but a very few hours.

So is it in this case: a man may have some trouble in his mind and conscience about indwelling sin; he finds all not well, as it should be with him, more from the effects of sin and its continual eruptions, than the nature of it, which he hopes to wrestle with; but now when the law comes, it lets the soul know that its disease is deadly and mortal, that it is exceeding sinful, as being the root

and cause of all his alienation from God and thus also the law proceeds against it.

Thirdly: The law judges the person, or lets the sinner plainly know what he is to expect upon the account of this sin. This is the law's proper work; its discovering property is but preparative to its judging. The law is itself, when it is in the throne. Here it minces not the matter with sinners, as we use to do one with another, but tells him plainly, Thou art the man in whom this exceeding sinful sin dwells, and you must answer for the guilt of it. And this, methinks, if any thing, should rouse up a man to set himself in opposition to it, yea, utterly to destroy it. The law lets him know that upon the account of this sin, he is obnoxious to the curse and wrath of the great God against him; yea, pronounces the sentence of everlasting condemnation upon him upon that account; abide in this state and perish, is its language. It leaves not the soul without this warning in this world, and will leave it without excuse on that account in the world to come.

Fourthly: The law so follows on its sentence, that it disquiets and affrights the soul, and suffers it not to enjoy the least rest or quietness in harbouring its sinful inmate. Whenever the soul has indulged its commands, made provision for it, immediately the law flies upon it, with the wrath and terror of the Lord, makes it quake and tremble; it shall have no rest, but is like a poor beast that has a deadly arrow sticking in its sides, that makes it restless wherever it is, and whatever it does.

Fifthly: The law stays not here, but also it slays the soul, Rom. vii. 9, that is, by its conviction of the nature, power, and desert of this indwelling sin

it deprives him in whom it is, of all that life of self-righteousness and hope which formerly he sustained himself with; it leaves him as a poor, dead, helpless, hopeless creature. And all this in the pursuit of that opposition that it makes against this sin. May we not now expect, that the power of it will be quelled and its strength broken; that it will die away before these strokes of the law of God? but the truth is, such is its power and strength, that it is quite otherwise; like him whom the poets feign to be born of the earth; when one thought to slay him by casting him on the ground, by every fall he recovered new strength, and was more vigorous than formerly; so it is with all the falls and repulses that are given to indwelling sin by the law. For,

First: It is not conquered. A conquest infers two things in respect of the conquered: First, loss of dominion; and, Secondly, loss of strength. Wherever any one is conquered, he is depoiled of both these. He loses both his authority and his power. So the strong man armed, being prevailed against, is bound, and his goods are spoiled. But now, neither of these befalls indwelling sin, by the assaults of the law: it loses not one jot of its dominion nor strength by all the blows that are given to it. The law cannot do this thing, Rom. viii. 3, it cannot deprive sin of its power and dominion; for "he that is under the law is also under sin;" that is, whatever power the law gets upon the conscience of a man, so that he fear to sin, lest the sentence and curse of it should befall him, yet sin still reigns and rules in his heart. Therefore, saith the apostle, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace," Rom. vi. 14, intimating plainly,

that though a person be in never so much subjec tion to the authority of the law, yet that will not exempt and acquit him from the dominion of sin. Yea, the law by all its work upon the soul, instead of freeing and acquitting it from the reign of sin, and bondage to it, does accidentally greatly increase its misery and bondage; as the sentence of the judge on the bench against a malefactor adds to his misery. The soul is under the dominion of sin, and it may be, abides in its woful condition in much security; fearing neither sin nor judgment. The law setting upon him in this condition by all the ways before mentioned, brings him into great trouble and perplexity, fear and terror, but delivers him not at all. So that it is with the soul as it was with the Israelites when Moses had delivered his message to Pharaoh, they were so far from getting liberty by it, that their bondage was increased, "and they found that they were in a very evil case," Exod. v. 19; yea, and we shall see, that sin doth like Pharaoh; finding its rule disturbed, it grows more outrageously oppressive, and doubles the bondage of their souls. This is not then the work of the law to destroy sin, or deprive it of that dominion which it has by nature.

Nor does it by all these strokes of the law lose any thing of its strength. It continues both its authority and its force; it is neither destroyed nor weakened. Yea,

Secondly: It is so far from being conquered, that it is only enraged. The whole work of the law, does only provoke and enrage sin; and cause it, as it has opportunity, to put out its strength with more power and vigour and force than formerly. This the apostle shows at large, Rom. vii. 9—13.

But you will say, do we not see it by experience,

that many are wrought upon by the preaching of the law to a relinquishment of many sins, and amendment of their lives, and to a great contending against the eruptions of those other corruptions which they cannot yet mortify; and it cannot be denied, but that great is the power and efficacy of the law; when preached and applied to the conscience in a due manner: I answer,

First: It is acknowledged, that very great and effectual is the power of the law of God. Great are the effects that are wrought by it; and it shall surely accomplish every end for which of God it is appointed. But yet the subduing of sin, is none of its work; it is not designed of God to that purpose; and therefore it is no dishonour if it cannot do that which is not its proper work. Rom. viii. 3.

Secondly: Whatever effects it have upon some, yet we see that in the most, such is the power and prevalency of sin, that it makes no impression at all upon them. May you not see every where men living many years in congregations where the law is powerfully preached, and applied to the consciences, as to all the ends and purposes for which the Lord is pleased to make use of it, and not once be moved by it; nor receive any more impression from the strokes of it, than blows with a straw would give to an adamant? They are neither convinced by it, nor terrified, nor awed, nor instructed, but continue deaf, ignorant, senseless, secure, as if they had never been told of the guilt of sin, or terror of the Lord. Such as these are congregations full of, who proclaim the triumphing power of sin over the dispensation of the law.

Thirdly: When any of the effects mentioned are wrought, it is not from the power of the letter of the law, but from the actual efficacy of the Spirit

of God, putting forth his virtue and power for that end and purpose: and we deny not but that the Spirit of the Lord is able to restrain and quell the power of lust, when he pleaseth; and some ways, whereby he is pleased so to do, we have formerly considered. But,

Fourthly: Notwithstanding all that may be observed of the power of the law, upon the souls of men, yet it is most evident, that lust is not conquered, nor subdued, nor mortified by it. For,

First: Though the course of sin may be repelled, for a season, by the dispensation of the law, yet the spring and fountain of it, is not dried up thereby. Though it withdraws and hides itself for a season, it is, as I have elsewhere shown, but to shift out of a storm, and then to return again. As a traveller, in his way, meeting with a violent storm of thunder and rain, immediately turns out of his way, to some house or tree for his shelter; but yet, this causes him not to give over his journey; so soon as the storm is over he returns to his way and progress again. So it is with men in bondage to sin; they are in a course of pursuing their lusts; the law meets with them in a storm of thunder and lightning from heaven, terrifies and hinders them in their way; this turns them for a season, out of their course; they will run to prayer or amendment of life, for some shelter from the storm of wrath, which they fear is coming upon their consciences. But is their course stopped? are their principles altered? not at all. So soon as the storm is over, that they begin to wear out that sense, and the terror that was upon them, they return to their former course, in the service of sin again. This was the state with Pharaoh once and again.

Secondly: In such seasons, sin is not conquered,

but diverted. When it seems to fall under the power of the law, indeed it is only turned into a new channel; it is not dried up. If you go and set a dam against the streams of a river, that you suffer no water to pass in the old course and channel, but it breaks out another way, and turns all its streams in a new course, you will not say, you have dried up that river; though some that come and look into the old channel, may think, perhaps, that the waters are utterly gone. So it is in this case. The streams of sin, it may be, run in open sensuality and profaneness: in drunkenness and viciousness. The preaching of the law sets a dam against these courses; conscience is terrified, and the man dares not walk in the ways wherein he has been formerly engaged; his companions in sin not finding him in his old ways, begin to laugh at him, as one that is converted, and growing precise; professors themselves begin to be persuaded, that the work of God is upon his heart, because they see his old streams are dried up; but if there have been only a work of the law upon him, there is a dam put to his course, but the spring of sin is not dried up, only the streams of it are turned another way. It may be, the man is fallen upon other more secret, or more spiritual sins; or, if he be beat from them also, the whole strength of lust and sin, will take up its residence in self-righteousness, and pour out, thereby, as filthy streams as in any other way whatever. So that notwithstanding the whole work of the law upon the souls of men, indwelling sin will keep alive in them still, which is another evidence of its great power and strength.

I shall yet touch upon some other evidences of the same truth that I have under consideration; but

I shall be brief in them. In the next place then, the great endeavours of men ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, for the subduing and mortifying of sin, which are all fruitless, do evidence the great strength and power of it.

Men who have no strength against sin, may yet be made sensible of the strength of sin. The way whereby, for the most part, they come to that knowledge, is by some previous sense that they have of the guilt of sin. This men have by the light of their consciences: they cannot avoid it. This is not a thing in their choice; whether they will or no, they cannot but know sin to be evil, and that, such an evil, that renders them obnoxious to the judgment of God. This galls the minds and consciences of some so far, that they are kept in awe, and dare not sin as they would. Being awed with a sense of the guilt of sin, and the terror of the Lord, men begin to endeavour to abstain from sin, at least from such sins as they have been most terrified about. While they have this design in hand, the strength and power of sin begins to discover itself to them: they begin to find, that there is something in them, that is not in their own power; for, notwithstanding their resolutions and purposes, they sin still; and that so, or in such a manner, as that their consciences inform them, that they must therefore perish eternally. This puts them on self-endeavours to suppress the eruption of sin, because they cannot be quiet unless so they do, nor have any rest or peace within. Now being ignorant of that only way whereby sin is to be mortified, that is, by the Spirit of Christ, they fix on many ways, in their own strength, to suppress it, if not to slay it; as being ignorant of that

only way whereby consciences, burdened with the guilt of sin, may be pacified, that is, by the blood of Christ, they endeavour by many other ways, to accomplish that end in vain; for no man, by any self-endeavours, can obtain peace with God. Some of the ways, whereby they endeavour to suppress the power of sin, which casts them into an unquiet condition, and their insufficiency for that end, we must look into.

First: they will promise and bind themselves, by vows, from those sins which they have been most liable to, and so have been most perplexed with. The Psalmist shows this to be one great engine whereby false and hypocritical persons do endeavour to extricate and deliver themselves out of trouble and perplexity; they make promises to God, which he calls, "flattering him with the lips." Psalm lxxviii. 36. So it is in this case. Being fresh galled with the guilt of any sin, that by the power of their temptations, they, it may be, have frequently been overtaken in, they vow and promise, that, at least for some such space of time as they will limit, they will not commit that sin again; and this course of proceeding is prescribed to them, by some who pretend to direct their consciences in this duty. Conscience of this, now makes them watch over themselves, as to the outward act of the sin that they are galled with; and so it has one of these two effects, for either they do abstain from it for the time they had prescribed, or they do not: if they do not, as seldom they do, especially if it be a sin that has a peculiar root in their nature and constitution, and is improved by custom into a habit, if any suitable temptation be presented to them; their sin is increased, and therewith their terror,

and they are wofully discouraged in making any opposition to sin; and therefore, for the most part, after one or two vain attempts, or more, it may be, knowing no other way to mortify sin, but this of vowing against it; and keeping of that vow in their own strength, they give over all contests, and become wholly the servants of sin, being bounded only by outward considerations, without any serious endeavours for a recovery. Or, secondly, suppose that they have success in their resolutions, and do abstain from actual sins, their appointed season; commonly one of these two things ensues: either they think they have well discharged their duty, and so may a little now, at least for a season, indulge their corruptions and lusts, and so are entangled again in the same snares of sin as formerly; or else they reckon that their vow and promise has preserved them, and so sacrifice to their own net and drag; setting up a righteousness of their own, against the grace of God; which is so far from weakening indwelling sin, that it strengthens it, in the root and principle, that it may hereafter reign in the soul in security. Or, at the most, the best success that can be imagined to this way of dealing with sin, is but the restraining of some outward eruptions of it, which tends nothing to the weakening of its power; and therefore, such persons by all their endeavours are very far from being freed from the inward toiling, burning, disquieting, perplexing power of sin. And this is the state of most men who are kept in bondage under the power of conviction; hell, death, and the wrath of God are continually presented to their conscience; this makes them labour with all their strength against that sin which most enrages their

consciences, and most increases their fears; that is, the actual eruption of it; for, for the most part, while they are freed from that, they are safe; though in the mean time, sin lies tumultuating in and defiling of the heart continually. As with running sores; outward repelling medicines may skin them over, and hinder their corruption from coming forth; but the issue of them is, that they cause them to fester inwardly, and so prove, though it may be not so noisome and offensive as they were before, yet far more dangerous. So is it with this repelling of the power of corruption, by men's vows, and promises against it; external eruptions are, it may be, restrained for a season; but the inward root and principle is not weakened in the least. And most commonly this is the issue of this way; that sin, having gotten more strength, and being enraged by its restraint, breaks all its bounds, and captivates the soul to all filthy abominations: which is the principle, as was before observed, of most of the visible apostasies which we have in the world. 2 Pet. ii. 19, 20.

The Holy Ghost compares sinners, because of the odious, fierce, poisonous nature of this indwelling sin, to lions, bears, and asps. Isa. xi. 6—9. Now this is the excellency of gospel grace, that it changes the nature and inward principles of these otherwise passionate, untamed beasts; making the wolf as the kid, the lion as the lamb, and the bear as the cow. When this is effected, they may safely be trusted in; a little child may lead them; but these self-endeavours do not at all change the nature, but restrain their outward violence; he that takes a lion, or a wolf, and shuts him up from ravening, whilst yet his inward violence remains,

may well expect that at one time or other they will break their bonds and fall to their former ways of rapine and violence. However, shutting them up, does not, as we see, change their natures, but only restrains their rage from doing open spoil. So it is in this case ; it is grace alone that changes the heart, and takes away that poison and fierceness that is in them by nature ; men's self-endeavours do but coerce them as to some outward eruptions.

Secondly : Beyond bare vows and promises, with some watchfulness to observe them in a rational use of ordinary means, men have put, and some do yet put themselves on extraordinary ways of mortifying sin. This is the foundation of all that has a show of wisdom and religion in the papacy ; their hours of prayer, fastings, their immuring and cloistering themselves, their pilgrimages, penances, and self-torturing discipline, spring all from this root. I shall not speak of the innumerable evils that have attended these self-invented ways of mortification, and how they all of them have been turned into means, occasions, and advantages of sinning ; nor of the horrible hypocrisy which evidently cleaves unto the most of their observers ; nor of that superstition which gives life to them all, being a thing riveted in the natures of some, and their constitutions, fixed on others by inveterate prejudices, and the same by others taken up for secular advantages ; but I will suppose the best that can be made of it, and it will be found to be a self-invented design of men ignorant of the righteousness of God, to give a check to this power of indwelling sin whereof we speak. And it is almost incredible, what fearful self-macerations and horrible sufferings, this design has carried men out

to. And undoubtedly their blind zeal and superstition will rise in judgment, and condemn the horrible sloth and negligence of the most of them to whom the Lord has granted the saving light of the gospel. But what is the end of these things? The apostle in brief gives us an account: "They attain not the righteousness aimed at," Rom. ix. 31, 32; they come not up into a conformity to the law; sin is not mortified; no, nor the power of it weakened; but what it loses in sensual, in carnal pleasures, it takes up, with great advantage, in blindness, darkness, superstition, self-righteousness and soul pride, contempt of the gospel, and the righteousness of it, and reigns no less than in the most profligate sinners in the world.

Lastly: The strength, efficacy, and power of this law of sin, may be further evidenced from its life and in-being in the soul, notwithstanding the wound that is given to it, in the first conversion of the soul to God; and the continual opposition that is made to it by grace. But this is the subject and design of another endeavour.

It may now be expected, that we should here add the special uses of all this discovery that has been made of the power, deceit, prevalency, and success of this great adversary of our souls. But as that humility, self-abasement, watchfulness, diligence, and application to the Lord Christ for relief, which will become those who find in themselves, by experience, the power of this law of sin, have been occasionally mentioned and inculcated through the whole preceding discourse; so for what concerns the actual mortification of it, I shall only recommend to the reader, for his direction, another small treatise written long since to that purpose

which I suppose he may do well to consider together with this, if he find these things to be his concernment.

To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

THE END

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Owen, John
The nature, power, deceit, and prevalency of indwelling sin in believers.

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